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**THE KEY TO FAITH**



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# THE KEY TO FAITH

BY  
M. O. GERSHENSON

*Authorized translation from the Russian*

BY  
HERMAN FRANK

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TO  
LAURIE MAGNUS, ESQ.  
THIS TRANSLATION  
IN HIS BROTHER'S, LEONARD ARTHUR'S, MEMORY



## INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR

MIKHAIL OSIPOVICH GERSHENSON was primarily a historian of literature, but at the same time an excellent critic and publicist. To his mind the underlying motive of all creative efforts is the pursuit and communication of ultimate truth. Both Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, as exponents of the novel-writer's art, were animated by the conviction that religion is the fundamental activity of man. In the field of literary history and criticism, too, there were in Russia a few great writers who dedicated themselves with consuming passion to the search of the Absolute Good. Gershenson was one of the greatest among them. It may be fairly assumed that he holds the highest place for the past twenty-five years among Russia's publicists. Like Carlyle, he was at once a philosopher and literary critic of the highest standing, a philosopher among critics and a critic among philosophers. His deft, penetrating analysis laid open the magic of Pushkin's verse and unveiled the charms of Turgenev's reverie, but those artistic niceties were

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by no means his main objective. What seems to have been of the greatest consequence to Gershenson is the inner spirit, the general philosophy behind the group of which the individuals he wrote about were only distinguished representatives. He saw below the surface of things, goaded on by love of life and an insatiable curiosity.

Gershenson the philosopher was no less brilliant. With an insistent eagerness, he criticized false or inadequate philosophical creeds, such as rationalism or positivism. With an amazing skill, he shattered false ideas, using methods distinctly different from those of a dull and sober analysis, for he had too much of burning interest in the problem of human destiny to permit of so cool-headed an approach. His own method, which may be well defined as humanizing the abstract, was by far a more effective one. He would, in the first place, undermine the premises of the ideas he held to be wrong, and then start building up his own concepts with a grace and art which it was a delight to observe. Again, artistic intuition, a wonderful insight into the core of the subject, stood him in good stead whenever he took up an apparently abstract problem. By his bright, clever way of discussion, a matter abstract by nature was swiftly turned into a

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reality, for he was a lover of life and not of abstractions. On the other hand, in trying to get at the facts, he pointed out the way to wider conceptions that verge upon pure metaphysics. In the broader sense that applies to thinkers of keen creative imagination, he was most eminently a philosopher, apt to see through human nature and to talk about it in an absorbing way.

Gershenson was fascinated by the ideas of the leading Russian philosophers of the years 1800 to 1850, all of whom may be described as intellectual mystics. In his view, the realm of their doctrines and ways of life formed a vast living picture. By interpretive biographies, illuminating comments and carefully edited texts, he threw unexpected light upon their careers, views, and writings. He was in particular greatly impressed by the thoughts of two religious and political thinkers—Peter J. Chaadaiev and Ivan V. Kyrjevsky. The system of Chaadaiev's philosophy was as original as his political position was unusual. In the eyes of the autocratic government of Nicolas I, he was a "disturber of public opinion," which means a revolutionary thinker; on the other hand, the progressive part of the general public thought him an exponent of conservatism. His social philosophy can be summed up in a few

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sentences. The political life of nations is directed to transitory and material ends. In reality, though, this life is realizing a part of an eternal ethical idea. That idea is the idea that every social act is essentially a religious affair, as much so as the fervent prayer of the pious. Although modern humanitarian doctrines deny the existence of a supersensuous world, they are in reality based upon true love of one's neighbor, however inconsistent with materialistic philosophy such a love may be. What Chaadaiev has to say about social life, according to Gershenson, is this: Step in and you will find the presence of God here, but you must remember thereafter that you are in the presence of God here and that you are serving Him.

The thoughts of Ivan V. Kyrjevsky moved on a different plane. He was above all concerned with phenomena of mental and spiritual life. Gershenson makes the bold assertion that this Russian thinker foreshadowed by some fifty years the theory of the subliminal advanced by Frederic Myers, the noted American psychologist, in 1886. Myers, in the words of William James, regarded the subliminal as the enveloping mother-consciousness in each of us from which the consciousness we wot of is precipitated like a crystal. Needless to say, the

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Russian philosopher did not attack the problem in a scientific way at all. He was subject to the promptings of pure intuition and drew his conclusions from the closest possible analysis of his own mental organization. Mental life, asserts Kyrjevsky, cannot be fully controlled by intellect, nor is it to be adequately explained by logical discourse. We shall thus never be able to bridge the gulf between our soul and the world, if the data of the intellect alone are made the starting point. In every human being there is in addition, however, something central, compact and fundamental, a certain mixture into which sentiments, inclinations and affections all enter. It may be defined as man's true self, or his moral personality, the coherent and unitary kernel of the soul, representative of our central and abiding being. This central whole is the receiving station by which our personality is tied up with the world-soul, the personality and will of God. Intellect, so far from being able to give full expression to the inner life of the soul, is likely to paralyze the will, and prove a detriment by hampering the growth of our real self. Through intellectual reasoning, nations, like individuals, are liable to turn thoughts from substance into words and ready-made formulas and schemes. Put roughly, men become so involved in words and

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formulas that they mistake them for actual life. Consequently, Kyryevsky did not believe in the abstract form of human knowledge based upon rationalism and expressed in logical discourse. By no means, however, did he preach a reversion to the Dark Ages. He was only concerned to show that a living, or spiritual, form of knowledge is bound to stimulate both the thought and will. To acquire such a living form of knowledge, one must link up his mysterious soul with the outer world and be guided by its vetoes and approvals. As long as thoughts run mainly to the abstract and appear content if attractively clothed with word or symbol, they remain devoid of clutch or influence over the soul and will. Once they have grown so as to be inexpressible, they have reached a state of maturity, however, where they exert an effect upon human conduct.

Gershenson was profoundly impressed with the depth and sincerity of Kyryevsky's ideas. Indeed, both thinkers are at one in their conception of the moral personality as a single whole embracing the entire life of the soul and sending messages into every corner of the human being. The moral personality is the cosmic element in man, the divine spark by which his spiritual life is sustained. The only task set to man with reference to his own true



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self is to organize and discipline his will properly, so that gaps between thought and corresponding appropriate action might be avoided. Positivism is, so to speak, human consciousness inside out, a break between inner and outer reality. This, in its turn, implies that all contacts peculiar to the single human being with the world should be broken up. Once our mental organization is crystallized around the inner personality, there is hardly any room left for positivistic philosophy. In its innermost precincts, the soul comes into constant touch with powers moving in the world, as currents of one cosmic will circulate through all the individual wills. The consciousness is then of necessity open to religious impulses that operate in the interest of an absolute and all-pervading solidarity between the individual and the world.

These conceptions form the essential characteristic of Gershenson's entire work. His writings are throughout permeated with the beauty of his light-giving personality which was the fruitage of the intimate, intuitive relationship between his consciousness and the world. The distinction of his manner as fully reflected his single-minded nature as it was mirrored in his profound learning and literary mastery.

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Mikhail Osipovich Gershenson was born in 1869 at Kishinev, Southwest Russia, of Jewish middle class stock. His parents piously adhered to the religion of their forebears. The young Gershenson graduated from a high school with a predominantly classical curriculum only to find that as a Jew he was barred from entrance into the Department of History and Letters of the Moscow University, for which he had passionately craved. In the 80's of the past century, political reaction and religious bigotry in Russia were at flood tide. There could not be much hope and promise ahead for an unbaptized Jew with a classical university education, who would not be allowed to engage in teaching at schools of any kind. The elder Gershenson, who lived in constant trepidation lest his son be led into, and succumb to, the temptation to abjure his faith, sent him to Germany to get a professional training in engineering. But Gershenson's heart lay very far indeed from studies of this sort. After a forced stay of a year or two abroad, he succeeded by mere chance in gaining admission to the University of Moscow. There he studied history, philosophy and political science with great zeal. At the university he was the beloved disciple of Professor Paul G. Vinogradoff, the internationally known scholar who, for the last fifteen

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years, has been instructor at Oxford University and editor of the Oxford Studies of Social and Legal History. Gershenson was an omnivorous reader who kept his mind open to influences of all kinds. When he lighted upon the views of the half-forgotten Russian philosophers of great vision and courage, it proved the dawn of a new revelation for him. For the rest of his life, he was in constant communion with the great spirits of that bygone generation, and he used to tell fascinating stories about them for all the world as if he had been one of their acquaintances. With all their limitations and unintentional errors, he admired them as inspiring leaders of a new religious-philosophical movement.

Upon Gershenson's graduation from the university in 1894, Professor Vinogradoff suggested to the authorities that they offer him a scholarship in preparation for a professorship in literary history. But his religion again proved an insuperable obstacle. At that time he began his literary activities by a translation of "Principles of Composition and Style" by Gustave Lanson, the famous French literary historian and critic. Many of Lanson's leading ideas, such as the close individual characterization of a writer as a clue to the understanding of his environment, were later on applied by Gershen-

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son in his own work. For the next thirty years, he lived in Moscow and conscientiously followed his calling as scholar, author and lecturer, but never obtained an adequate material reward for his labors. And yet, neither pecuniary privations nor failing health could ever discourage or depress him or his indomitable idealism. He loved uncompromised truth above everything else, and considered veracity as the highest standard of morality. With great endurance he stood the extremely hard times which fell to the lot of all Russian intellectuals in the years following the collapse of the old political system, in 1918. He untiringly used his experience and influence to help his fellow writers, many of whom would hardly have been able to survive the ordeal had it not been for his assistance and advice. During the last three and a half years of his life, Gershenson was president of the literary section of the Moscow Academy of Art Sciences. Though of small and slender build, he was quick and active in his movements, and his personality was particularly impressive for its charm of kindness and purity of heart. There was an elegance about his literary craftsmanship which made many young students look to him for guidance and advice. At the time of his death, February 19, 1925, there was no other

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scholar in Russia whose word in the field of literary history carried more weight and inspired greater confidence. For the moment and for our time he leaves an irreparable void.

The crisis of the Western civilization as revealed by the Great War and its aftermath led Gershenson to the conclusion that the spiritual life would never again be reconstructed on its former false foundation—the supremacy of the abstract over the personal. To him, the so-called spiritual values, though of man's making, are cruel fetishes which, like vampires, suck the blood out of human beings. All of those values are abstractions built upon palpable things as their base. Many *Hamlets* and Sistine Madonnas gave rise to a general value, Art. This is the way all the abstract values, such as Property, Morals, Religion, Nationality, Culture, and so on, came into being. In them the living heart's blood of the best men and women is embodied. Each of the values has a cult of its own with priests and devout believers. The priests, in white heat of emotion, preach about the "interests" of their phantom-idols and demand sacrifices to them. Is not State craving for power? Nationality for unity? Industry for expansion? The more abstract the spiritual values, the more heartless and greedy are they. The World War, in

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the opinion of Gershenson, could be regarded as an unprecedented hecatomb, which an alliance of a few abstract values, through their priests, exacted of Europe.

He realizes of course, the danger embedded in the fact that man makes use of his increasing knowledge for imparting greater subtlety to his predatory activities. But he goes much deeper than this. Once man's true self is killed by the overwhelming power of these abstractions of his own creation, no more growth of the spiritual life follows that would bring bliss and equilibrium to the entire being. Every increase in the fullness of life is accompanied by new intellectual temptations to dissolve them into fresh abstract principles disturbing to the primogenial harmony of the soul. Compared to the joy derived from a truth tingling with life which one has discovered himself, all the delights put together which we get as the product of the cold attitude of pure reason sink into utter insignificance. Consequently, Gershenson, like Rousseau, dreams about throwing off the intellectual heritage of mankind. He cannot suppress his feelings of tedium and nausea with all the intellectual axioms and beauties of art together with the beaten paths by which man is led to their wholesale acceptance. This was not due merely

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to a desire to condemn the results of our civilization; to his mind it would hardly be sensible to trust the intellect with an appraisal of civilization inasmuch as intellect itself was fathered by it. His feelings are rather an expression of an inner voice, a sentiment gnawing at him in as acute and irrefutable a way as that of hunger or physical pain.

This is the essence of Gershenson's gloomy meditations that culminate in a rejection of modern culture. But he can by no means be classed among the so-called enemies of civilization, as was, for instance, the case with Leo Tolstoy. His heart, it is true, is harrowed by culture as it is to-day, but he thinks highly of certain civilizations of the past, such as that of the 14th century as reflected in Dante's verse. Then, he asserts, words still were fresh and substantial, and human thought had not become so entangled in cobwebs. He is, therefore, compelled to admit to himself that this soulless civilization of ours must be utterly and wholly on the wrong track. He cannot help loathing the wrestle of lifeless ghosts which is going on in the world to-day. This sentiment arouses in the innermost recess of his consciousness the prevision of a new way of life that will fulfill and not circumvent human destiny. Such is the ultimate conviction of his true self,



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and in uttering a cry of anguish over our present misguided efforts at salvation, he feels sure that many of our contemporaries agree with him in these views.

As if stimulated by his apprehensions about the failure of modern civilization, Gershenson became more appreciative of, and well disposed toward, the intrinsic value of ancient culture. Two of the outstanding monuments of the far-away past, the Hebrew Bible and the philosophy of Heraclitus, especially now captivated his mind. To these subjects his chief writings of the last few years were devoted. "Gulfstream" is the title of a little book that deals with the symbolic significance of fire, which conception throughout the ages is an idea common to the race. The eternal content of the Old Testament is the subject matter of "The Key to Faith."

"The Key to Faith" is essentially a whole-hearted attempt by a modern to open up a new access to the Book Eternal. It seems to have been shaped upon Carlyle's conception that the world is God, for in Gershenson's opinion, Jehovah is the personification of the universal needs of man. The images describing the act of Creation in the Bible corresponded, perhaps, with the scientific conceptions of thousands of years ago, but they are not in harmony with modern science. Quite different, however,



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is the verdict when we approach the moral contents of the Old Testament. Their value must be measured by the general truth which they imply, not only as a guide to the understanding of the past, but as an object lesson for the generations to come. It is true that some traits in the character of Jehovah make Him appear arbitrary, cruel, and not over-fastidious in dealing with men. But what is the real explanation of these deficiencies of character? Are they not simply a proof that the human spirit, as reflected in the spirit of the best God it was then able to conceive, recognized its own frailty and imperfection! The God of the prophets and psalmists did not differ in the principle on which He was conceived from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If the God of the prophets of Israel appears more attractive to us than Jehovah of the Pentateuch, it is only on account of the spiritual excellency of the prophets, men whom inspiration keyed up to the highest pitch of humanity. At this height, earth borders on heaven, and human vision becomes the expression of the divine.

Gershenson firmly believed that the religious impulses supply the cohesive force which unifies a society and a culture. Religion—to use one of his favorite illustrations—resembles the foundation of a house which, though invis-

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ble, is quite indispensable to any structure able to stand up and last. But all his views imply a decided opposition to every kind of deification of humanity or the nation—in short, to ascribing absolute value to any relative form of existence. In speaking of the human soul, he told me once that it resembles certain soft metals which require an alloy to harden them. Is it not, perhaps, for this reason that Theonomy, the Kingdom of Heaven, not Autonomy, self-assertion, has been the final goal with all true prophets of social and economic justice?

In modern times, as in the time of old, there is scarcely a more urgent need than to heal man of the tendency to worship the nation or humanity, and to believe in humanitarian progress, the mainspring of which is the proud dream of an earthly paradise. Autonomy, not love nor pity, appears the newest of cures for all our social evils. Gershenson's was not, however, the faith of an intellectual overcome by awesome abstractions about a new world of his own imagining. He loved God with all his heart, all his soul, and all his mind, and believed that men are brothers and sons of one Father. In his entire being, he was one of the wise and brave who, by their lives and, if needed, by their deaths, do homage to the highest ideals of religion.

HERMAN FRANK.

## PREFACE

THOUGH Wellhausen and his associates have proved that the original parts of the Old Testament were distorted, or even in some degree invented, for the sake of some late reformation; though the religion of the prophets differed from the religion of the Hebrew people as a body—yet there are four arguments establishing the doctrine of the Old Testament as at bottom single and all of a piece. First, the prophets and the priests, the makers of reformation, came late, when the religious system of their people was already so consistent that any attempt to alter it would certainly have proved a failure. Secondly, these men themselves rose from the ranks of the people, and differed from them only by the clearness of their consciousness and the range of their horizon. By their blood, their unconscious aspirations, and their thoughts they were identified with the people; and thus only could they have felt in themselves an inclination to clarify and purify the national creed, or to arrange it into a system of law. Thirdly, the history of the Hebrew re-

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ligion provides a demonstration of homogeneity over thousands of years, during which it does not show any signs of schism. There are no witnesses to any struggle of the orthodox mind against a new order in faith and cult: this is a proof that the core of the Hebrew religion has remained always the same. Fourthly, and this is most important, its very core is such an indivisible system of intuitive apprehensions as could only have been created by a collective national mind. The prophets as well as the reformers of the cult, so far from challenging this foundation of the creed of the people, all started from it as an absolute truth. This is the general sense of my thesis—that this golden ingot of the Hebrew religion lies hidden in a magnificent casket, under numberless embroidered coverlets, in the Old Testament. It was not a predesigned product of man, but an organic outcome of the spirit, a fruitage of Nature becoming man.

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## WHAT IS FAITH?





# THE KEY TO FAITH

## CHAPTER I

### THE BURNING BUSH

TO UNDERSTAND the nature of man, and the nature of one's true self, a plummet must be dropped into that profound creation of the human mind—its concept of God. This idea is a stupendous one: it amounts to a premonition of the ultimate truth, the one comprehensive, universal truth, floating as yet perhaps somewhat indistinctly before our eyes. We cannot know what all the experiences were that directed the mind of the semisavage to the mystery of things not perceptible to the senses. And the symbolic presentation of the God idea through the ages is even incomparably more baffling. Whence and how did the Hebrew people obtain the detailed and definite knowledge of the Creator and Lord of the universe made manifest in the Bible? The picture of God here is on lines so bold, yet so simple, that any other portraiture, even one by the

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most gifted genius, would seem artificial and scant.

The biography of the Hebrew God is the fullest, clearest, and most precise biography extant of any God. I should like to retell the story of how the God of all mankind, under the mantle of the Jehovah of the Old Testament, lived and suffered and accomplished his world-work.

What first strikes us in the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the contrast between the essence of God, on one hand, and the manifestations of God to man, on the other. He is more real than anything else, being the cause and source of everything; He lives and acts as a person, yet, in contradistinction to every other being, He is quite unperceivable by the senses: absolutely real, and yet totally ideal. God is not to be seen; he who tries to gaze at Him perishes.<sup>1</sup> Moses hears only his voice from the midst of the bush.<sup>2</sup> He is wrapped in darkness, the book of Exodus affirms: "The people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."<sup>3</sup> So Solomon declares at the consecration of the temple: "The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness."<sup>4</sup> Job knows this to be so: "Lo, He goeth by me, and I see Him not; He passeth

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xix. 21, 24; xxx. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xx. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. iii. 4, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Kin. viii. 12; II Chron. vi. 1.

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on also, but I perceive Him not.”<sup>6</sup> Moses bids the people: “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner or similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire.”<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, every image made by any man who tries to make an image of God must be false. “Thou shalt not make unto thee any idol.” God has not even a name—He must be spoken of by way of allusion only, as Lord or the Being. He really exists and yet is not in space; sharply and definitely as He is characterized, He lacks both form and face. What is He then?

This much is clear concerning the nature of God: his nature is of the nature of fire, for the Old Testament depicts God manifesting himself to men in various different forms of fire. He first appears to Moses in the burning bush, an ethereal fire: “The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.”<sup>7</sup> And yet the fire He is, on other occasions, is real, the same fire which does burn wood up. When incensed by wrath He spurts forth smoke and burning coals. The book of Numbers informs us that “the anger of God was kindled against Israel, and the fire of the Lord burned among them, and consumed them that were in the

<sup>6</sup> Job ix. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Deut. iv. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Exod. iii. 2.

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uttermost parts of the camp; . . . and when Moses prayed unto the Lord the fire was quenched.”<sup>8</sup> In Psalms we read: “There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth (that) devoured: coals were kindled by it.”<sup>9</sup> He steams forth fire. Deborah sings: “The mountains melted from before the Lord,”<sup>10</sup> and instances of how contact with God sets things afire are many times repeated in the Bible—in Psalms, by Isaiah, by Micah: hills melted at the presence of the Lord like wax, like water before the flames.<sup>11</sup> Not one of these utterances is metaphorical, the words used are the names for common physical processes, and are employed in their usual sense. God is essentially fire by nature, and his existence is a flaming existence that never burns out. On Sinai He appears to the people concealed in flames: “And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace.”<sup>12</sup> When God wishes to give evidence to man of his presence, a spontaneous fire is the form which that evidence takes. To the question of Abraham: “Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit the land?” God orders him to take an heifer, a she goat

<sup>8</sup> Num. xi. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. xviii.

<sup>10</sup> Judg. v. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. xcvi. 5; Isa. lxiv. 1-3; Mic. i, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Exod. xix. 18.

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and a ram, to divide them, and “when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.”<sup>13</sup> Moses warned the people: To-day God shall appear to you; and so it came to pass: having burnt a part of the offering, Aaron left the untouched part on the altar, then “Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people.” And at this very moment there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering, and the fat, and all the people saw it.<sup>14</sup> Contact with God in his passing set it afire. Even thus it was when God appeared to Gideon, and Gideon doubted whether it were God speaking to him,—God deigned to manifest himself to him in a fire token. Gideon brought the flesh of a kid, and unleavened cakes, and put them on the rock, then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose a fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh, and the unleavened cakes.<sup>15</sup> Of Elijah yet more is told: he built up an altar, and made a trench around it, and commanded the people to pour water three times upon the altar and the offering till

<sup>13</sup> Gen. xv. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Lev. ix. 23-24.

<sup>15</sup> Judg. vi. 21.

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the trench should be filled with water; then he prayed unto the Lord, and the fire of the Lord fell (like a ball), and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and set fire to and consumed the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.<sup>16</sup> The same "fire from the Lord" set fire to and consumed 250 men that had revolted against Moses in the desert.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the God of the Old Testament is nearly related by nature to one of the elements; He is fleshless, faceless, fire breathing, and leads a flaming existence. The vision of Ezekiel, even, is similar: "And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about."<sup>18</sup> God has, however, in his very nature, also, a second mode of contact with men, the mode of incarnation, and in one form: at need He can appear in the guise of an angel, but these angels always wear the human form. The inference is that the human figure is probably concealed in Him. Congenitally, it seems, He has not, or will not assume, any other incar-

<sup>16</sup> I Kin. xviii. 38.

<sup>17</sup> Num. xvi. 35.

<sup>18</sup> Ezek. i. 27; viii. 2.

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nate form save the human. That is how it can be said: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him." The Old Testament often speaks of God's appearance to men in the guise of an angel wearing the human form. Especially instructive is the naïve tale in Genesis <sup>19</sup> of the proclamation to Abraham, where God appears in the shape of three men, who speak as one in the name of God, and to whom Abraham speaks, now as if there were three, now as to one. And in a tale further on—of God's visit to Lot—"those men" and "angels" indifferently alternate, but Lot speaks to them as if they were one and that one, God: "Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight," <sup>20</sup> etc. The same confusion is met with in the story of God's appeal to Gideon: He who came to Gideon is referred to either as God's angel, or God, but Gideon calls him God. <sup>21</sup> Also an angel appears to Hagar in the desert and speaks as God in that guise: "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly"; and she is not deceived but knows that God has spoken to her. <sup>22</sup> An angel appears to the mother of Samson, and she said to her husband: "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an

<sup>19</sup> Gen. xviii.

<sup>20</sup> Gen. xix. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Judg. vi. 11-23.

<sup>22</sup> Gen. xvi. 1-13.

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angel of God, very terrible.”<sup>23</sup> To Joshua, the son of Nun, God appeared as a man with a drawn sword in his hand, calling himself the captain of the host of the Lord; but the following verses indicate it is well understood that it was God himself.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, God in the guise of an angel appeared to Balaam and his ass.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, God in these appearances to men in the guise of angels displays only a shadow of his full power. God in all his terrible might is never embodied in any visible form. When wroth at the setting up of the golden calf, God says to Moses: “Lead thy people to the promised land, and an angel of mine (with only a shadow of my full power) will go before thee; I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: should I go up amidst you, I would consume you in a moment.”<sup>26</sup> Previously, He had spoken another warning: “I send an angel before thee, beware of him . . . for my name is in him.”<sup>27</sup> When the angel sent by God to strike Israel with pestilence came to Jerusalem, and stretched out his hand upon the city to destroy it, God repented, and said to the angel:

<sup>23</sup> Judg. xiii. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, 5.

<sup>24</sup> Josh. v. 13-15; Exod. iii. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Exod. xxiii. 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> Num. xxii. 22-35.



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"It is enough, stay now thine hand." <sup>28</sup> And the angels speak to Lot: "God hath sent us to destroy that town." <sup>29</sup> The angels are not God, but a manifestation and partial embodiment of Him.

As is well known, the star part in a cosmology is a function of the Godhead: that has always been an idea common to the race. It penetrates even the coarsest paganism; and all monotheism, including that of the Hebrews, is superimposed upon that foundation. God, immemorially primitive speculations agree, creates the world, fixes the laws of nature, and watches over the universe. In God omnipotence resides, both physical and spiritual: by his will all life is directed; by his understanding the lot of everything is predisposed; and without his consent nothing happens.

In a comparison with this composite portrait of the one God of primitive human speculation, the Biblical God does not lose his individuality. He is as unlike other monotheistic gods in the performance of his part as the Creator and Leader of the universe as He is in his material manifestations.

Monotheism at its zenith depicts a God absolute and all-embracing in power and discernment. Physically almighty, He also sees and

<sup>28</sup> II Sam. xxiv. 16.

<sup>29</sup> Gen. xix. 13.

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hears everything: in Him all possible forces in their totality come to a poise. But this is not the Biblical God who is still elemental rather than personal. In his anger, his being bursts out into flames that are literally a consuming fire. He possesses neither fullness of power nor sense of proportion: He is unbridled, irascible; in his omnipotence there are gaps, and his omniscience nods at times.

As a man who brooks no restraint in his anger keeps away from certain provocations, so God himself is afraid of his own explosiveness, and has to take precautionary measures against the irreparable consequences of its outbreaks. "I will not go up in the midst of you; for ye are a stiffnecked people: should I go up amidst you, I would consume you in a moment." In an outburst of anger, He sent the great flood upon the earth, and He afterwards repented it. "I will not again smite any more every living thing, as I have done,"—and, like a mortal giving a pledge, He set the rainbow as a token of his promise never to do it again. "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more

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become a flood to destroy all flesh.”<sup>80</sup> And how often God has thus to regret his doings! Frequently He failed to foresee results, that were not to his liking, of his decisions. Who but He created man and all flesh? Yet He was disappointed when creation proved imperfect, and walked in the ways of evil. How came it to pass that He could not anticipate and forestall every defect in the very act of creation? Why would He not have foreknowledge of the eventual imperfections? But no, He failed and was but an imperfect creator; in his work of creation He did not predestinate perfection. “And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart.”<sup>81</sup> He sets up Saul as king over Israel, but, later, He becomes unconvinced of the wisdom of his choice, and says to Samuel: “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments,” and again “the Lord repented that He had made Saul to be king over Israel.”<sup>82</sup> How many there are of these failures and disappointments! And the cause? God’s elemental being, of the nature of fire by constitution and similarly passionate in temperament. He is impulsive, utterly so; acts on first impressions

<sup>80</sup> Gen. ix. 14-15.    <sup>81</sup> Gen. vi. 6.    <sup>82</sup> I Sam. xv. 11, 35.

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or on the slightest spur of the moment. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect."<sup>33</sup> Why? There is no explanation thought necessary. "Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord slew him."<sup>34</sup> Why Er rather than one of his equally wicked fellows? Again, no accusation, no motive. He has chosen Israel as his people: some strange whim—no reason why is given. Moses said to the people: "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you."<sup>35</sup> He took an impulsive fancy to them, as we say. And many a time God is about to come to a decision, we are told, that He will soon bitterly regret. Often He lifts his hand in order to strike Israel a heavy blow, but in the nick of time the supplications of Moses or some other favorite bring Him to reason.

The same elemental passionateness at every step, like unto the smoke of smoldering fires, bedims God's memory and perceptions. The

<sup>33</sup> Gen. iv. 4, 5.    <sup>34</sup> Gen. xxxviii. 7.    <sup>35</sup> Deut. vii. 6-8.

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everlasting tempest raging within Him makes Him forgetful or careless. It is He who commands the Hebrews to mark their houses with blood that He may not make mistakes in the night, when He is to smite every firstborn in the land of Egypt, and smite the Hebrews as well.<sup>36</sup> Very often we are told that He has no idea what is happening on the earth. He had no knowledge at the time of its occurrence that Adam and Eve were eating of the forbidden tree, and when He hears of it from the lips of Adam He still has to be informed that it was the serpent which beguiled them both.<sup>37</sup> Long after Creation has turned aside from Him, He knew nothing about it; at length He did take notice. "And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."<sup>38</sup> Again, He did not know that Sodom and Gomorrah were foul with vice until the cry of them came unto Him; and then He made up his mind to go down and see for himself: "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."<sup>39</sup> Nor does He know how many righteous are amongst them. So, too, the tower of Babel was far along when

<sup>36</sup> Exod. xii. 13.

<sup>37</sup> Gen. iii.

<sup>38</sup> Gen. vi. 12.

<sup>39</sup> Gen. xviii. 21.

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suddenly God noticed it. "And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded." <sup>40</sup> Similarly, Pharaoh was not the reason that the Hebrews had to endure bondage in the Land of Egypt; it was because the Lord had let them drop out of his mind. Many a thing may go on for a long time upon the earth before God is aware of it. "And God remembered Noah," "and God remembered Rachel," "and the Lord remembered her [Hannah]." <sup>41</sup> Men live in these intervals of his forgetfulness as best they can; what a martyrdom it is, until at last God remembers them and intervenes in their behalf.

Nay more, it is not the rule but the exception for God of his own initiative to perceive what is happening on earth; in the majority of cases the sighs and prayers of men direct his attention to it. Rather there must rise a clamor from them up to Him in the remote place of his dwelling, where He rolls as a flaming whirlwind. He must be called upon with a loud voice to attract his attention. He himself bids the Hebrews: "And if ye go to war . . . then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered by the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness . . . ye shall blow

<sup>40</sup> Gen. xi. 5.    <sup>41</sup> Gen. viii. 1; xxx. 22; I Sam. i. 19.

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with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, . . . that they may be to you for a memorial before your God.” <sup>42</sup> Only through the noise of their carousals which reached Him did He become aware of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>43</sup> Hagar and her son Ishmael strayed in the desert, and the water from their gourds was spent; then she cast off the child, famishing with thirst, that she might not see him die, and sat her down afar off, and wept. God would not have noticed them in their sore distress but for the fact that “He heard the voice of the lad.” <sup>44</sup> The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage (in Egypt), and they cried; and their complaint came up unto God. “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, with Jacob.” <sup>45</sup> Elijah cried unto God: “O Lord, my God, I pray thee let this child’s soul come into him again,” <sup>46</sup> and the Lord heard the voice of Elijah. Isaiah sent to Hezekiah saying: “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard,” <sup>47</sup> and so on.

<sup>42</sup> Num. x. 9-10.

<sup>43</sup> Gen. xviii. 20-21.

<sup>44</sup> Gen. xxi. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Exod. iii. 7-8; vi. 5.

<sup>46</sup> I Kin. xvii. 22.

<sup>47</sup> II Kin. xix. 20.

## CHAPTER II

### JEHOVAH STRUGGLING WITH MAN

Now that the story of the Biblical God contained in the first chapter has been told to show his nature and qualities, let us analyze his relations.

All the documents of the ancient religions without exception—the Hindoo, the Egyptian, the Assyro-Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman—begin with a biography of the supernal God. Particulars are given of his origin and fate before the creation of the world. But the Old Testament knows nothing of this kind about God's history. Why? Because God as a biological person has to be born and to undergo many phases, while God as an elemental being of the nature of fire by constitution has no biography at all. He exists without being born from the very beginning, and undergoes no changes, but is immutable. From the outset, the God that the Bible knows is a God who undergoes no change through all time; it makes no reference to anything preceding, but



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starts, therefore, at the creation of the world. The creation of the world is the single fact or deed which, so to speak, is all there is to the prehistoric biography of the Biblical God.

But from this one undertaking, after-results followed which very soon bring God into repeated action. Thus, according to the Bible, the biography of God may be divided into two parts: (1) the period up to the creation of the world, when God was alone, and (2) the period after the creation, in which God and the world exist together. And this second part of God's biography is devoted to the history of his relations to man whom He has created.

But this seems very strange: God and man are so incomparable that it is puzzling to note or explain why God's attention should henceforth be so entirely absorbed by the conduct of his own creation; why He gets so vehemently perturbed over the obedience or disobedience of creation; why it becomes his ceaseless pre-occupation to follow on his creation's heels, rewarding, punishing and instructing. God himself, it is even made to appear, depends for his very existence and welfare on the ultimate destiny of man and man's attitude toward Him.

From this point of view, the Old Testament marks off two categories in the world: objects

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and creatures; or inanimate forces on the one hand, and animate beings on the other.

God is omnipotent over the inanimate creation; indeed, his dominion here is in a two-fold sense almighty. First, He gave these inanimate forces laws which He decreed they must keep forever; secondly, He reserved the right at will, whenever He wishes, to break these laws himself, and divert them from their course to perform what men call a "miracle." The Old Testament contains many instances of these miracles. In reply to the petition by Joshua, the son of Nun, God makes the sun stand still over Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Ajalon to give the Hebrews more time to rout the Amorites. At God's will, Moses' rod is changed into a serpent, and the serpent back again into the rod. Water gushes out of the earth and becomes blood; a hailstorm blasts the whole of Egypt save the land of Goshen where the Hebrews dwell, and then instantly ceases at his will. A thick darkness enwraps the land of Egypt for three months, except in the homes of the Hebrews, where it was daylight as usual. God commands and the sea yawns open, laying bare its bed, and Israel passes through dry shod, whilst the waters stand up, like walls, on both the right and left side; these walls of water tumble down when Pharaoh and his

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army essay the same passage, and they are drowned. Manna falls down from heaven; a rock gives forth water when Moses touches it with his rod—and so on.

This great power which He exercises over the inanimate forces, God does not possess over the living creatures; perhaps because He bestowed on them his spirit, and, in sharing his spirit, animate beings secured a portion of God's prerogatives of freedom and choice. The wills of the living, though they are lower than, can not be smothered by, his own, but are self-moved. In granting them their liberty, did not God, like a poor craftsman, make a mistake on the Day of Creation? Although on the sixth day, when all his work was done, He saw everything made by Him, and beheld that it was "very good," on the morrow He very soon convinced himself that his creation was out of gear: Adam's sin took place, and then things went from bad to worse. Nor was it long before his animate creation had turned out to be thoroughly unsatisfactory. But the whole creation had not proved a failure, only the parts of it endowed with a soul or will; they were the very cause of the decay. Since He could not forcibly reform them because He had pledged himself not to override their wills, the only thing to do was to destroy all but a rem-

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nant, and make a fresh start with them. Or, perhaps, was this gift of liberty to the living creation a piece of deliberate forethought on the part of God, *i.e.*, was it considered necessary by Him in the first planning of Creation for some remote end, known only to himself? At any rate, after his failure with Adam, He does not desist, but experiments again with Noah.

Even the lower animals are not subordinate to God, but are self-willed. Before the flood, not only man but all living creation turned away from the path set for them on the earth. "All flesh wherein is the breath of life under the heaven, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air,"—they all were destroyed by God for insubordination. The serpent has free will, which he uses to whisper to Eve to do evil, but God not only did not know this at the time; He did not foresee that the serpent would use craft, nor take measures to forestall it. But naturally man, of all the living creation, has the greatest share of this gift of liberty, for he is made in the image and likeness of God, he is like a "materialized spirit" ("and man became a living soul")—he is man. He has free will in virtue of the very act of his creation, and it remains his inalienably forever. Indeed, even the resort to the flood was useless, for it did not change

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the nature of man in this respect; after the flood, God admitted that this was so: there was no means of changing this part of man's nature. "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."<sup>1</sup>

This inalienableness of man's free will makes him the peer of God. A new autonomy—that of man—was established, beside that of God, on the first day of Creation. This is the most important fact in the history of the world.

God planted the tree of life in Paradise. He also planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and, according to his design, man was not to eat of the fruit of this tree. It might be imagined that the good and sufficient thing to do would be to put into the man, when creating him, the instinct that the case seemed to demand—a distaste for, and a disinclination to eat of, the fruit. But God either did not like to, or could not, do this; He desired or was obliged to create man with an entirely free will.

It was on this fashion that the first divergence of the two wills came to pass: God did not wish that man should eat from the tree of knowledge, but man wished to do so, and he ate. And every step of the way since, we find

<sup>1</sup> Gen. viii. 21.

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departures of man's will from that of God. Man lives, acts and sets about his business as he likes; Cain kills Abel; mankind generally becomes corrupt before the face of God, they build up the tower of Babel, Abraham goes in unto Hagar to beget a son, Sodom and Gomorrah defile the earth with debauchery, Lot's daughters lie in turn with their father—God seems to have no power to master and turn back the tide of wrong conduct. Again, God dared not lead the Hebrews to the Promised Land through the nearer and fertile way by the land of the Philistines: He was afraid that, on meeting with hindrance and opposition, they would repent of their departure and return to Egypt; therefore He leads them about by way of the wilderness, through the Red Sea.<sup>2</sup> God always has to act *ex post facto*. Very often God has no other choice but to abide by the event, and even to scale down the penalties. Thus the struggle between them often follows this course: spontaneously and contrary to the will of God, man makes for himself a new road, and takes his first steps on it. Then God gives in and finally smooths the way for man on this same road which man has arbitrarily traced out for himself. For instance: after the Fall, Adam and Eve, knowing they were naked,

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xiii. 17-18.

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sewed themselves aprons of fig leaves; it was God who told them how to improve their clothes by making coats of skins. God commanded man, when creating him, to eat only vegetable food, but later on, when He became convinced, after the flood, that man's inclination to evil is inveterate, He permitted him to eat meat as well.<sup>3</sup> The sons of Israel ask Samuel to set over them a king. God's reply is to show them, by thunder and rain, how great is the wickedness they have done in making this request, for He himself is their king. The sons of Israel renew their demand. Thereupon, God told Samuel to give in to their wish, and, moreover, even instructed him who should reign, and sent him Saul, the man of his choice.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, that God can directly influence man's will, is shown very often in the Old Testament. Thus, God restrained Abimelech, the king of Gerar, from injuring the honor of Sarah, the married woman ("Therefore suffered I thee not to touch her").<sup>5</sup> Many times He managed successfully "to harden the heart of Pharaoh"; He instilled a wicked thought in the mind of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon;<sup>6</sup> and very many times raised against disobedient Israel the will of enemy kings. Evidently, He

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ix. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. xx. 6.

<sup>4</sup> I Sam. viii. 6-9; ix. 15-16; xii. 16-20. <sup>6</sup> I Kin. xii. 15.

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thus treats only people who are of no consequence to Him; such people He can and does make use of as tools. It would obviously be degrading the will of man to the level of lower creatures, were it possible to press the button of his will from without. None directly loved of God, may have his will forced even by the pressures of persuasion used by God on those of no consequence to Him. Not once does He even restrain the spirit of Israel from its plunges into idolatry or other sins; David, his favorite, suffers no hindrance from Him, either when coveting Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, or when slaying Uriah. Evidently, God's highest intention for men is to be fulfilled only by people of free will, upon whom his heaviest persuasions have not been exercised, and only for homage from men of that stamp does God hunger.

The instant that a free God created man free, there began in the world the rivalry of two free wills. Therefore, both have to face and endure a hard struggle. Not a moment passes but that God is troubled over man's self-will, and being the stronger, He smites him sorely for his lapses into disobedience, God's life is full of grief and anxiety; so is man's who suffers, commits sins, and is chastised. Would it not be better, if God had



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withheld the gift of free will—made man like a stone? Is it reasonable for man to be given freedom, and to be punished for making the most of it? But the main question that obtrudes is: To what end does God need to institute this hard and ruthless game? For what end does He bestow on man a freedom so sweet to him—to torment him out of freedom at the last?

This is the cosmogony of the Bible, magnificent and simple in its surface appearance, deeply mysterious in its inner sense. For its better understanding, we must seek to learn of what kind was the experience, the knowledge of nature, appropriated and expressed by the ancient Hebrew in his literary monuments.

Here and there we find in the first chapters of Genesis the word *Elohim*—Gods (in the plural); and this period of its use is the period of the oldest myths of the Hebrew people, in which the freedom of man appeared to God to be a positive danger to himself. God is afraid of man, we are told, as of a possible rival: "And God said, behold the man is become as one of us (Gods) to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever,"<sup>7</sup> God drives Adam forth from Paradise. Is not that

<sup>7</sup> Gen. iii. 22.

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a sufficient precaution? No, for God's continued apprehensions are apparently well founded. Man may very easily slink back, after his expulsion, into the Garden; his self-will is irresistible. Thus God prefers to preserve himself from this threatening new danger, by setting an angel with a whirling sword at the gate "to keep the way of the tree of life." God became disturbed similarly when the tower of Babel as high as heaven was being built—"and this they began to do"—and God confounded their languages, that they might be scattered. Even clearer and deeper in its symbolism is the later myth of the struggle between Jacob and God,—as well as in its incomparable simplicity. Nowhere has a deeper vision been clothed in a higher poetical image. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he (the angel) said: Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he (Jacob) said: I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he (the angel) said unto him: What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he (the angel) said: Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince

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hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said: Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he (the angel) said: Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.”<sup>8</sup> I dare not comment on the details of this myth; let every one dwell upon them for himself. The distinctive feature of it is not merely that the two contestants are so closely matched, nor the prevailing of the man. The fact that the man can put up any struggle at all is in itself the most striking feature. The point which must not be missed is that suddenly, at night, without any reason, Jacob is attacked by God. The Bible also records another assault of the same kind. Moses, chosen by God for his destiny, departed with his wife and children from Midian, where they dwelt, to Egypt in order to fulfill his mission; and on his road, in an inn, the Lord met him and sought to slay him. Zipporah (Moses’ wife), taking a sharp stone, and cutting off her son’s foreskin, cast it at his feet, and said: “Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.”<sup>9</sup> Then God let him go. Pondering over these combats, strange ideas may well arise in the mind: God is urgently in need of man, and unwearyingly exerts himself for the sake of man; yet how

<sup>8</sup> Gen. xxxii. 24-29.

<sup>9</sup> Exod. iv. 24-26.

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utterly He hates man, because his very need of him runs into conflict with man's inalienable freedom, and because of man's everlasting grievances and complaints. Jacob and Moses are not of the rank and file of the human host: they are God's elect, men personally acquainted with God. All the more probable, therefore, that God, walking abroad at night in the guise of an angel, and lighting on men of their regal stamp, should flash with fierce anger over all the grief and anxiety which human beings were to Him, forget himself, and fall upon them to destroy them.

These cyclopean pictures were the invention of the ancient Hebrew. In them the seed of the Hebrew religion lies hidden like a kernel in the husk. In the course of time, the simple notion of duels between God and picked men, on account of God's fear of man as a rival and hatred of him as an incorrigible, was vaporized away. But the fundamental idea contained in it of the relations between God and man remained; the strange and mysterious idea of *the dependence of God on the unison with his own of the free will of man*. All the religions, from the coarsest to the most enlightened, are solidly built up on this principle as a base, the only exception being, perhaps, Buddhism which virtually excluded the idea of God. But in no

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other religion was this principle expressed so deeply and consciously, and held to so inflexibly and so logically, as in the religion of the ancient Hebrews.

One idea repeats itself all through the history of the ideas of the Hebrew people—from the semisavage nomad who mused before his tent at the nightly stars, to the great prophets and scribes of Judea,—one idea running through all the centuries: God has need of man. The Hebrew religion developed its plan and content from this notion. It can be summarized at any time in this simple manner: What does it say that God essentially needs from man? What does it insist that He actually needs from man? The answer given by the heathen Hebrew was the same as that given by all primitive religions in the world: God has need of the food with which He is provided by the faithful. Even in Genesis we find traces of this idea of the service that men can give to God: Noah after the flood offered burnt offerings on the altar. "God smelled a sweet savor, and He said in his heart; I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake."<sup>10</sup> The meaning of these lines is evident: once God got a whiff of the sweet savor of the offerings that man can make if he so wills, He decided to preserve

<sup>10</sup> Gen. viii. 21.

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man, though he be evil, in order not to cut himself off from other occasions for the enjoyment of such a dainty morsel. As late as the book of Leviticus, offerings are called "the bread of God," *i.e.*, his food,<sup>11</sup> and the invariable phrase in this connection is: that the offerings are made for a "sweet savor." Even in Isaiah, God reproaches Israel on the ground that "thou hast not filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices."<sup>12</sup> Clearly, this early conception remained alive in Judaism to the end, because the practice (not the symbolical cult) up to the last of sacrifice with its slayings and burnings of animals, drink offerings, etc., can have no other underlying meaning save to supply God with food. But the answer given to the question, what does God need of men, advanced far ahead of the lagging tradition. Certainly, long before Isaiah's time the Hebrew did not believe God had need of food; the offering was conceived as an honorable gift to God, a token of allegiance and piety. And this idea, in fact, predominates in the whole of the Old Testament. Offerings are only one of the principal evidences of man's relation to God. God requires of man something more: He needs from him an attitude of submission, and one of its ingredients is the respect to which ceremonial

<sup>11</sup> Lev. xxi. 6, 17, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Isa. xliii. 24.

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rites, and among other things sacrifices, bear witness. Voluntary avowal, obedience, man's fear and love—this is what God asks for.

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,"<sup>13</sup>—this is the first fundamental commandment. The book of Joshua summarizes the whole law of Moses in these words: "To love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."<sup>14</sup> The same definition of man's first duty is also given by the prophets. In Jeremiah God reminds Israel that in the day of their departure from Egypt He gave them but *one* commandment: "Obey my voice."<sup>15</sup>

Why has God this need of man's recognition? According to the Old Testament, his need of it is so urgent that this one anxiety entirely absorbs Him—to compel man to be obedient and to submit to Him. He miraculously brought Israel up out of Egypt in order "to make a name of greatness and terribleness for himself throughout the world by driving out nations from before his people, whom He had

<sup>13</sup> Deut. x. 12.

<sup>14</sup> Jos. xxii. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. xi. 7.

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redeemed out of Egypt.”<sup>16</sup> By these miracles, God wished to gain not only the love and fear of the Hebrews, but also of the Egyptians as well, and of the whole of mankind: “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart—and I will be honored upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.”<sup>17</sup> God had redeemed Israel to be a peculiar people, with the special purpose that their blessedness should glorify his name. This old idea, expressed already in the Second Book of Samuel,<sup>18</sup> was merely taken over and developed by the second Isaiah: “Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified,” “this people have I formed for myself, they (their good fortune at my hands) shall shew forth my praise.”<sup>19</sup> “All flesh shall know that the Lord is the savior and the redeemer,”<sup>20</sup> so that everybody may be warned and keep in mind that he is entirely subject to Him. On this one object all his intentions focus; everything He does serves only to extend his glory. Thus, man prays to Him: “save me for thy glory’s sake,” *i.e.*, because salvation would add to God’s glory by rendering man a credit to Him. The infidelity of man causes God un-

<sup>16</sup> I Chron. xvii. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Exod. xiv. 4, 17-18.

<sup>18</sup> II Sam. vii. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Isa. xlix. 3, 6; xliii. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Isa. xlix. 26.



## JEHOVAH STRUGGLING WITH MAN

speakable pain because of the blemishes his glory thus receives: He is out of patience with them, utterly worn out with all his efforts to teach them, to compel them to remember and respect Him and his omnipotence; He is always devising some new plan to bring them to reason, and is not squeamish in his methods. His nature is stormy and violent, and He pursues his aim of winning plaudits for himself with a passionate pettishness, eternally goaded by his anguish over insults. His punishments of nonrecognition of his title to first place are pitiless, and his cruelty to these offenders limitless. For the least disobedience—death or some sentence even more dreadful. At his command thousands of people innocent of wrongdoing, and amongst them women and children, are slain by the sword. These punishments befell the towns guilty of conduct counter to his will to glory, and even were visited upon those cities found by Israel in the Promised Land: "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded."<sup>21</sup> The reason for these massacres was this: the heathen, remaining in the con-

<sup>21</sup> Josh. x. 40.

## THE KEY TO FAITH

quered land, might not be let off, because that would give them a chance to estrange the Hebrews from God. The Biblical chronicles calmly relate a story we cannot read without trembling. The wife of Jeroboam went to Shiloh to ask from the prophet what is to become of her sick son. And God said to her through the prophet: "For that thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam and on all the people. Get thee to thine own house, and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die." And the unhappy mother returned from Shiloh to Jerusalem. What a journey for her, what a message to remember. . . . And as she reached the threshold of her house, the child died.<sup>22</sup> With such ferocity does God thirst and seek after recognition and glory for himself.

<sup>22</sup> I Kin. xiv.

## CHAPTER III

### THE COVENANT

MAN is born self-willed and self-confident, disinclined to give credence to God or to obey Him. On the contrary, he stands ready to believe in tangible evidence only, and in the guidance obtainable from his own generalized experience. Even the righteous Abraham does not always believe God, for he jeered in reply to God's direct promise given him face to face that he should have posterity, and said in his heart: Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old? How glad God is accordingly when man believes Him! Abraham had, on other previous occasions, believed God's words that a great posterity should come out of him—and it is said: "Abraham believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness."<sup>1</sup> Man does not even have to fulfill, for when he merely shows a readiness to fulfill God's precepts, God is immensely pleased with him, and copiously bestows earthly goods on him: "Now I know," He said to Abraham,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xv. 6.

## THE KEY TO FAITH

restraining his hand with the knife from slaying his son, "that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me"; "and by myself I have sworn, for because thou hast done this thing . . . I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice." <sup>a</sup> Man constantly requires a material sign to tip the beam before he will believe God's predictions: thus, Abraham at first believed God's promise and then began to doubt:—Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit this land?—and God did not refuse in disdain to confirm his words by a sign. He is so much accustomed to human unbelief and craves and so highly appreciates man's trust that He is often prepared to submit to humiliation. Gideon, when called by God to save Israel, desires a warrant of victory from God before he ventures on the fight: "If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, then prove it to me. I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and let the dew be on the fleece only, and let it be dry on the earth beside." And God did so. The earth was dry, and out of the fleece Gideon wrung a full bowl of water. But Gideon was dissatisfied with this miracle as a suitable

<sup>a</sup> Gen. xxii. 12, 16-18.

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act of corroboration and asked to have it supplemented by the opposite miracle on the next night. God was not displeased with him for his persistence in unbelief, and his request was granted: on the next morning it was dry upon the fleece, and there was dew on all the ground.\* Sometimes, it may even happen that God himself offers a man a sign. God foretold an event through Isaiah to Ahaz, the king of Judah, and in proof suggested his asking Him for some sign. Ahaz from politeness refused: "I will not ask neither will I tempt the Lord." Isaiah, however, grew angry: "Hear ye now, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary (by keeping Him waiting) my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign (to overcome your reluctance to take Him at his word)."† This happened a second time with Isaiah when Hezekiah was deadly sick and prayed to God. God ordered Isaiah to tell him that his life would be prolonged by fifteen years, and he would be delivered out of the hands of the king of Assyria. Isaiah thus informed Hezekiah and added: "This shall be a sign unto thee from God, that God will do this thing that He has spoken. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-

\* Judg. vi. 36-40.

† Isa. vii. 13-14.

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dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees backward, by which degrees it was gone down. Thus runs the story in the book of Isaiah; <sup>5</sup> and even more characteristic is the version of II Kings, <sup>6</sup> where Hezekiah asked for a sign himself, and Isaiah offered him his choice whether the sun should go ten degrees forward or backward, whereupon Hezekiah replied: "It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees." How offensive this spirit of distrust is! A proof is required from God that He is a God of his word, and, moreover, a keen lookout is kept against any sharp practice on his part.

But God, as has been said, has need of man, and this fatal dependence deprives Him of such freedom of action as cutting off all dealings with him. He is obliged to yield, because He is self-debarred from acts of bald coercion, and for success in his purpose, owing to his passionate character, He must exert himself to the limit. Furthermore, and more exasperating still, men succeeded early in spying out the secret of God, *i.e.*, had, thousands of years before Schopenhauer, satisfied themselves of God's need of man. And this knowledge

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xxxviii. 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> II Kin. xx. 8-11.

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meant two things to them: first, God will never destroy mankind as a whole. So God is even obliged to spare the life of an individual sinner, because of the fact that the extirpation of mankind would be harmful to Him. Secondly, it opens a way to man to acquire the assistance of God by rendering Him the homage and obedience, of which, they have found out, He is so vitally in need. Man even dares to blurt this plain truth out to God's face: Thou thyself hast a profit in my remaining alive. "Return, O Lord, deliver my soul; oh save me for thy mercies' sake, for in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" "Open thine eyes, behold, lest no homage nor praise be rendered to thee by the dead in hell whose entrails are without spirit." Moses in his prayer to God, who was enraged by Israel's turbulence, reminds Him that his own prestige is at stake: "Now, if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the

<sup>†</sup> Ps. vi.

<sup>°</sup> Ps. xxx.

<sup>°</sup> Baruch ii. 17.

## THE KEY TO FAITH

wilderness.”<sup>10</sup> And Hezekiah prays to God: “Save us from the hand of Sennacherib, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.”<sup>11</sup> This is the meaning back of every vow: if you expect to receive the homage which you so urgently need, give me your assistance in advance, for, should you not give it to me—I shall not render you homage. “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and the stone which I have set for a pillar shall be God’s house; and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”<sup>12</sup> “And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said: If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be that whatsoever comes forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord’s and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.”<sup>13</sup>

Such is the power man has over God by virtue of his innate freedom combined with God’s need of him. But God also possesses a mighty

<sup>10</sup> Num. xiv. 15-16; Deut. ix. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Gen. xxviii. 20-22.

<sup>11</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Judg. xi. 30-31.



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weapon against man. He can, as a sovereign over all the material forces active in the world which condition the existence of man, easily pay him back for his slights and force him to think better of his disobedience. Consequently, man is as much dependent, for real enjoyment, on God, as God on man. Their relations are on lines of mutual profit or loss, and mutual peace or violence: in order to fulfill his inscrutable destiny, God must at all costs win from man homage and obedience; man, in order to subsist and to prosper, must impress God into his service. Hence, as a natural result, a consistent use of strategy by God against man. The bone of contention is man's original free will, the battle ground is man's body, for only through the body, the substance, which is from the start subordinate to Him, is God able to put a bridle on man's will, by paying him back in pain for the wounds inflicted upon his own prestige. Man has, however, a mediator between his body and his will: the reason, which controls the perceptions, and warns the will concerning the prospects of happiness or unhappiness, by generalizing perceptions into analogies, *i.e.*, by prevision. Thus, although God directly hits back at the body only, through it the reason is affected, and thereby, in the final reckon-

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ing, the will is indirectly influenced. By putting the body into a strait-jacket of misery, God brings the will to heel through the admonitions of man's own reason that this pain means it does not pay men to slight God. If, as often happens, He turns his attention to dealing directly with the reason in man, it is only in order to revive in the reason the memory of former unpleasant bodily experiences, and thereby urge it on to ply the will with arguments in favor of a change of policy.

The extraordinary belief that God and man are bound together by ties of mutual profit became so deeply inrooted in the national mind of the Hebrews that it ripened as a natural fruit into an idea even stranger of a formal covenant between man and God. If two parties are mutually and equally in need of each other, the only means of avoiding a struggle is to agree upon a mutual tribute. Consequently, God and man draw up, and enter into, a compact. By it God is bound to promote the welfare of man on earth to the extent that man renders homage to God as his only sovereign and fulfills his will. As long as man remains true to his duty of homage and obedience, he is entitled to rely on succeeding and on freedom from molestation; in the event of the alternative, he forfeits the support and

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aid of God, and moreover may, as might be expected, suffer a world of pain from an effort made by God to punish him, by the use of any available material means, for his violations of the covenant.

It is easy to perceive how much more advantageous God's position is in this covenant: his will is complete and indivisible, for He aims at one end—his due of homage and obedience from man. Therefore, He is not likely to be tempted to break the covenant, save on the rare occasions when He nods or becomes careless. Man, on the contrary, is torn daily by two contending tendencies: he eagerly desires at once freedom and welfare, but welfare is given to him only in return for the renunciation of untrammelled freedom—both are unattainable together, they preclude each other.

And so man is tossed from Scylla to Charybdis: either he is overenticed by the craving for freedom, and God soon puts him in a strait-jacket of misery, or after he gets intoxicated with earthly delights that reward his obedience, he thirsts next minute for freedom at any cost, and so on, without end, flinging himself into the arms of one or the other. The wisdom of experience teaches him that the best course is to yield a little to both; he is not able to renounce either of his desires, and therefore must

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reconcile them by some compromise, and proportion himself between them. But how dearly the heart must pay for this forced weighing and measuring of inestimable earthly goods, for the skimping of its freedom in order to gain a little happiness and relief from pain, or for the limitations of welfare, accepted with wide open eyes, in order to preserve but the shadow of freedom! A hard and subtle task! God knows very well how difficult it is, and so He throws sops to man, and forgives his sins or awards a mitigated penalty.

The covenant between God and man is the supporting pillar of the Biblical doctrine of God; yet the God of the Old Testament makes the compact not with particular individuals, but with the people as a whole, with his chosen people, Israel. Expressed or implied in it, is a deep conception of the joint and several pledge which binds every natural group of men, the conception of an irresistible contagion of good and bad examples in a community, of the moral liability of each for all, of all for each. The people's compact with God spreads its responsibility in its entirety over every individual, so that no particular man can complain of suffering for any common sin, and yet every one considers himself personally bound by the contract to God. When Hezekiah, in deadly

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sickness, prays to God: "Remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,"<sup>14</sup> he thus expresses this notion: I fulfilled my part in the covenant, why do you not carry out your share? Jeremiah also is given to stating his case against God, and asking Him to render account of his judgments: "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? And wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?"<sup>15</sup> But the fundamental dogma of the Old Testament is contained in the idea of the national pledge to God.

Yet the origin of this covenant between God and the people of Israel was traced by the legend to just this simple kernel—to an agreement entered into by God with Abraham, the ancestor of Israel. After selecting Abraham as the party of the second part for his righteousness, God "established a covenant" with him: "I will make thee exceedingly fruitful; I will make thee a father of many nations, and will give thee and thy seed the land of Canaan, that thou and thy seed may recognize me for their God." As a token of this covenant God set up circumcision.<sup>16</sup> Abraham accepted the covenant for himself and his posterity, and that

<sup>14</sup> II Kin. xx. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. xii. 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. xvii.

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very day circumcised himself and every male in his house. Thus was an eternal covenant established between God and Israel. On this first and initial act of agreement a second one had to follow when the posterity of Abraham multiplied to the dimensions of a people. God wanted solemnly, and more distinctively, to affirm his eternal covenant with Israel at the moment when this people appeared before the world prepared to take its place as an autonomous group on the threshold of independent life. He appeared to the people at the mount of Sinai, amidst thunderings and the blare of trumpets, and through Moses He announced to them his commands in detail. Israel had to decide then and there whether to covenant to fulfill the commandments of God. If they promised to keep them in holiness, God, in his turn, would bind himself to guard Israel on all their ways. After the people had listened to all that was told them by Moses, they answered with one voice: "All that God has said we will do." Then Moses wrote down all the words of God in the book of the covenant and read it aloud in the presence of the people, who again repeated their promise, whereupon Moses formally affirmed the covenant by a burnt offering, and sprinkled the people with the blood of the sacrifice. Later on, tradition says, the

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covenant between Israel and God was often, after grievous transgressions by Israel or on the eve of new periods of their history, reaffirmed. After he had brought Israel to the Jordan, Moses, according to the word of God, had to die. During the forty years of wandering in the desert the generation to whom God had spoken from Sinai had died out, and it was a new people, under the leadership of a new head, who were about to enter the Promised Land in order to settle there forever. At this decisive moment, Moses felt compelled to remind the people of the covenant. He summoned all Israel, from elders and captains to hewers of wood and carriers of water, with their wives and children, and told them the content of the "oath and covenant" which God had entered into with them that day, "that He may establish you to-day for his people and He may be unto you a God." Life and prosperity for submission to Him, curse and ruin for disobedience, were the alternatives set before them, and he called heaven and earth to be witnesses, and wrote the words of the covenant into a book, that Israel later on might not abjure the covenant.<sup>17</sup> And again, after Israel had established themselves in the land of Canaan, Joshua, before his death, gathered all the people

<sup>17</sup> Deut. xxix.

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and reminded them of all the mighty prowess God had shown on their behalf since taking them from the land of Egypt; and in conclusion Joshua bade them choose: would they serve the one God who had befriended them or the heathen gods? The whole people answered: "We will serve the Lord our God, and his voice we will obey." Then Joshua made a covenant with the people and inscribed it in a book, and, setting up a great stone under an oak, said to the people: "This stone hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God."<sup>18</sup>

This is the legendary history of the covenant, composed, of course, very late in order to strengthen and confirm the public esteem in which it was held at that time. The inverted pyramid built up by tradition in support of the covenant passes through the whole range of Hebrew history down to its roots, in Abraham, the far-away ancestor. Looking at what it grew to be, we see that it had attained a broad national basis, but the apex it was at the start is lost to view in the darkness of history—there is only one point: a covenant with one man. From the upper broad base of the legend it was possible to build back

<sup>18</sup> Josh. xxiv.



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into the past and erect a firm, really solid historical edifice.

The first historic proclamation of the covenant between God and Israel was in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, *i. e.*, about 623 B. C. Josiah and his adherents aimed at a religious reform that would exterminate the lingering traces of idolatry in order definitely to establish the cult of Jehovah. This was the way they went about giving the reform the semblance of a historical foundation:—A rumor was spread that the High Priest had found in the temple an ancient book containing the Testament given by God to Israel through Moses. Josiah then ordered the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, from the youngest to the oldest, to assemble and he read to them aloud the book which had been found. The king stood by a pillar, according to the chronicler, and made with the people a covenant in the name of God. "He made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant."<sup>19</sup> A second covenant, in good historical standing, was entered into

<sup>19</sup> II Kin. xxiii. 3.

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by Ezra, after Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity, at a meeting of the whole people, in which he reminded them of the covenant which had been made by God with Abraham, and later on with Moses. The book of the law of Moses was read out loud, and then a formal covenant was recorded, signed, and sealed by the elders and the priests; and all the people declared they would stand by those who had signed the covenant, and entered into the oath to observe all the commandments of God as they are written in the book of Moses.<sup>20</sup>

One unchangeable idea thus permeates the whole of the Old Testament, from its most ancient parts to the books even of the later prophets: that the relation between man and God is built on a formal covenant. The Bible keeps returning to the covenant, formally made between Israel and God, as the only right place to make a new start, and the prophets never cease from casting into the teeth of the people and their rulers their disregard of this covenant.

<sup>20</sup> Neh. viii-x.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LAW OF RETALIATION

A PROFOUND epistemology was enshrined in the depths of this covenant idea in the same unexpected way that the complexities of a living organism, beyond our vision, are clothed in a simple sack of skin. Judged from the outside, the covenant looks smooth, simple, and hard, like the surface of an animal's body or the trunk of a tree. The whole purport of the covenant may be reduced to one double condition. God says: "*Obey me in your spirit, and I will bestow on you prosperity for your body; I will not, if you disobey.*" This brief formula contains by implication the full meaning of the covenant. The full text of the covenant only elaborated this formula.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the choice: to renounce one's own will, and gain prosperity as a reward, or preserve free will and suffer hunger, cold, sickness, and slavery. As a law it is simple and irrevocable, as horrible as doom. It pierces the

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxvi; Deut. xxviii.

## THE KEY TO FAITH

mind like a needle, and brands the memory with a fiery seal that lasts through life. And this is repeated on nearly every page of the Scriptures: "I am the Lord thy God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." \* "Seek me, and ye shall live." "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword." †

Nothing is simpler to present than this doctrine, this one syllogism. Who is the true God? —He who absolutely sways the material powers of the world. What does this God do? He directs the activity of the material forces under his sway to the advantage of those who are faithful to Him and the hurt of them that disobey. *Ergo*, be faithful to God that you may prosper on earth.

Life's greatest lesson of wisdom to the man of the Old Testament was that God helps those who believe in Him. With what honest simplicity and childish ingenuousness they openly confess this knowledge! When Amaziah the king of Judah, after the victories over the Edomites, had brought the gods of the Edo-

\* Deut. v. 9-10.

† Isa. i. 19-20.

## THE LAW OF RETALIATION

mites home and bowed to them, a prophet came to him and said: "Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hands?" <sup>4</sup> Ahaz, after his defeat by the Assyrians, when pressed by the Philistines and Edomites, appealed in his despair to the gods of Damascus, calculating in this wise: Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me.<sup>5</sup> In 458 B. C. Ezra secured permission from Artaxerxes to transport home to Judah out of Babylon the remainder of the Hebrews who still dwelt in captivity; and he stated that they had told the king, when negotiating with him, that the protecting hand of their God was upon all them that sought Him, and his wrath was only against them that forsook Him; "thereupon *I was ashamed*, Ezra continues, to require of the King a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, and I proclaimed a fast to seek of God a right way for us." <sup>6</sup> How firm the faith in the power of faith must have been for it to force him thus to run the risk of rejecting earthly help! There were some thousands of people, including women and children, in the company with

<sup>4</sup> II Chron. xxv. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> Ezra viii. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup> II Chron. xxviii. 23.

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Ezra; and the way of their wandering was to be long, taking them through many hostile countries and dangers.

From this point, a self-consistent philosophy of history grows up, that permeates the whole of the Old Testament. Why is the Hebrew entitled and even obliged to believe that his God is the one true God? Because his God's genuineness was proved in an irrefutable manner by the miracles He performed when He led Israel from the land of Egypt. He showed himself able to do the incredible; to deliver the Hebrews when deliverance seemed impossible, feed them miraculously forty years in the desert, make them victorious over many a mighty people, and settle them in a country flowing with milk and honey. He achieved all this, feats which the gods of other peoples could not do for their devotees,—this is the one sure proof of his reality and superior resources. In the interest of this philosophy, the Bible embellishes the history of the Exodus with an abundance of miracles, and the chroniclers and the prophets unceasingly repeat this one formula: "the God of your fathers who has carried you out from Egypt"; that is, you must believe in Him for, as is proved by your miraculous deliverance from bondage in Egypt, He is the true God.

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Time flowed on unintermittently in waves of years, generations changed, but this all-sufficient rule of faith and practice remained unalterable. For centuries, father transmitted to son his devout faith in God and the law of retaliation. This law seemed to the Hebrew true beyond peradventure, the chief and the most infallible of the laws of life, enforced almost automatically: in return for faith in God, prosperity on earth; for unbelief, misfortune. In the so-called Book of the Covenant,<sup>7</sup> which scholars date in the ninth century B. C., we read: "If thou wilt carefully hearken to my voice, and do all that I shall speak, then will I be an enemy unto thine enemies, I will bless thy bread and thy water, and will take sickness away from the midst of thee." And the book of Judith (composed in the second century A. D.) records the same formula as something that can be taken for granted. "You ask whether we shall triumph over the Hebrews," says one of the advisers of Holofernes. How easily he finds the answer! "If they are sinning at present in the sight of their God, then we shall easily overcome them; but if they are obeying God and there is no iniquity in them, then let us rather remove from their borders, for their God will

<sup>7</sup> Exod. xxi-xxiii.

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surely defend them, and we shall become a by-word in the mouth of the people.”<sup>8</sup>

The true God is able to help, and the Hebrew God proved his genuineness by the miracles of help given by Him to his people in the Exodus; whereas the false gods fail in such emergencies, they are powerless to do this work of protection in the material world, and this helplessness proves their falsity. When the Hebrews through idolatry had brought God's wrath and his chastisement upon themselves, God sarcastically said to their spokesman: “Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.”<sup>9</sup> Samuel advises the people in the same terms: “Turn ye not aside; for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain”;<sup>10</sup> and Jeremiah repeats: “Why did you change your glory for that which doth not profit?”<sup>11</sup> “Why walk after things that do not profit?”<sup>12</sup> The prophet

<sup>8</sup> Judith v. 20-21.

<sup>10</sup> I Sam. xii. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Jer. ii. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Deut. xxxii. 37-39.

<sup>11</sup> Jer. ii. 11.



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always reverts to the same historical testimony to the existence of God—the miracles of helpfulness at the time of the Exodus: “The Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt—and brought us into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof.” <sup>13</sup>

Religion, the philosophy of history, practical wisdom—everything good and profitable is implied in this axiomatic truth. Both the history of the nation and the experience of an individual equally counsel: trust in God and obey his will, for He is omnipotent. One must believe merely because it is advantageous. The prophets were fond of imaging the covenant between Israel and God as a marriage: God is the husband, Israel his wife who often betrays Him with lovers in the persons of strange gods. Hosea thus relates: “Israel says, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread, and my water, my wool, and my flax, mine oil, and my drink,” for Israel had lost the faith again that everything was given by God, and fancied those false gods which cannot give anything would take care of them. Therefore God

<sup>13</sup> Jer. ii. 6-7.

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shall chastise Israel, and she shall seek the lovers, but shall not find them. Then shall she say: "I will go and return to my first husband (*i.e.*, to the true God), for then was it better with me than now."<sup>14</sup> Of a love of God there is not a hint; nothing but the prudence which makes a wife return to her husband whom she has deserted, because nobody but he can protect and feed her. The prophet himself does not speak of love entering into the issue; he only advises obedience. And whenever the prophets admonish Israel, what they ask for from her is gratitude for past favors, consideration of present advantage. This is the burden of their argument, when they speak of a marriage between Israel and God, and of Israel's adulteries.<sup>15</sup> It seems as though the prophet would sometimes feel compelled to ask himself: in the course of the centuries, up to the present, there has been no day, no hour, when Israel has not betrayed her God; what could have been the invincible feeling which always goaded her to fornication with strange, valueless gods? But this they never do ask. Evidently, they knew by intuition that any immediate uprooting of the sensu-

<sup>14</sup> Hos. ii. 5-8.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. iii. and particularly Ezekiel in the wonderful chapter xvi.

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ous element in the situation, the yearning to be quit of God, was out of the question. But they cannot help urging: since you have been given reason, therefore be reasonable, tame your passions, remain faithful to your husband, that you may not fall into poverty and bondage. They know that it does not lie in the scope of nature for man to love a God of that character. When the people with one voice replied to a question put them by Joshua, saying that they would faithfully serve God, Joshua corrected them at once: "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God, He is a jealous God," but may reason assist you, for "if you forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that He hath done you good."<sup>16</sup>

How could such an extraordinary rule of faith and practice be engendered by the human mind? Will anybody claim to believe to-day that there is a direct connection between theory in the form of metaphysical principles, and practice in the form of the invasion of his country by enemies or a plague of locusts? But three thousand years ago and more all civilized mankind—not the Hebrews only—were firmly convinced that a hard and fast con-

<sup>16</sup> JOS. xxiv. 19-20.

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nection between them was the most evident and unchangeable fact in the world. In the Louvre is the most ancient monument found in Canaan—the stone of Mashah, king of Moab in the ninth century B. C.; on it the heathen king relates that his country long endured the yoke of Israel, “as Chemosh (the supreme god of the Moabs) was displeased with his country”; but that he, Mashah, by his sword, has restored its independence, and erected at Carha, as a token of his victories over Israel, a temple to Chemosh, “a rock of deliverance, for he delivered me from all my enemies, and showed me the loss of all my enemies.” This same rule of faith and practice is the belief of the Assyrians, Egyptians, and Hindoos; it is at present the belief of the Kaf-firs, and the natives of Fiji; even in civilized countries, it is believed by all the unenlightened masses. Is it nothing more than sheer ignorance and stupidity?

Let us remind ourselves what this belief has cost humanity. It is easy for a modern to profess materialism or spiritualism: his conviction is nothing more than a piece of speculation with slight influence on his life, one that exacts from him—and this is the main point—no sacrifice. But these men of old time had to pay a high price for their belief, their faith

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in this rule of faith and practice was their life, and the guide of their actions. Innumerable, and some of them horrible, sacrifices, offered to God by humanity for thousands of years, were necessitated by the conviction of the truth of this law. The king of Moab, Mashah, when besieged in the fortress where he was making his last stand, after his defeat by the united armies of Judah and Israel, took his eldest son at that eleventh hour, and offered him for a burnt sacrifice to the god Chemosh to propitiate him—his son who was scheduled to take his place and reign after his death.<sup>17</sup> Again, whenever the peasants come to a priest in the time of drought, the two parties would haggle a long time, and at last the peasant would take out his purse to pay his share of the cost of the service of homage that would bring down rain; whenever a poor old woman buys a candle and kindles it in a church—they are, by sacrifices that pinch, affirming the validity of this first and great rule of faith and practice inherited from fathers and grandfathers. Man has always been hard and miserly, disinclined to futile extravagance, requiring in return for his every expenditure a certainty of gratification or profit. But millions of people have brought generous offerings to God all their lives, not

<sup>17</sup> II Kin. iii. 27.

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even sparing their dearest and nearest; sacrificing on a large scale or from day to day offering their mites, giving their blood, their work, and—perhaps the most precious possession of man—the yearnings and thoughts of every moment of their days. Such a working belief is evidently due to more than abstract thought and speculation; man can only be self-moved to offer the homage of sacrifice by an infallible persuasion that it pays, based on the solid foundation of experience. Therefore, it is certain that our distant ancestors, in reviewing their experience of life, observed the validity of the law manifesting itself unchangeably in instance after instance; this is the causal connection between belief in God and the prosperity of the believer on earth. And this knowledge, transmitted from one generation to another, and thus certified to by the outcome of millions of previous passionate cravings, was time after time corroborated over again. Obedience to God was by common consent a secure pledge for a successful life, and the sacrifice offered was considered an inalienable stake, a sound investment. We should not look down too haughtily on such a truth. The dark wisdom of that age was far behind modern science in the thoroughness of its tests; but that wisdom was not pigeonholed away disconnect-

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edly in compartments of knowledge, and, therefore, it contained a deep insight into, and discernment of, the order of the universe, now forgotten in the clarity of separate scientific laws. Certainly, one of these spiritual discernings was the belief in material retaliation by God. It may seem rather absurd, but let us unfold its meaning and we shall find it woven in with certain threads of feeling and reasoning which are continually spun by the human mind. They are long-lived and constant, because the men of old felt and thought just as we do.

## CHAPTER V

### FAITH AND SELF-WILL

SOMETIMES boiling fluids produce solid scum; the snail dresses itself in a strong precipitation of its own crust. Similarly, the fervent experiences, passionate and penetrating observations, presentiments, and promptings of men, after flowing together for ages, precipitate a solid dogma, a formula of faith, as if to secure to themselves a shell which is practical, transmissible and lasting. Such is the formula of the Hebrew faith. God has in his hand four dreadful plagues, four punishments to inflict on man for iniquity: the sword, hunger, wild beasts, and pestilence.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes it is a strange nation driven by the commandment of God which rises against the transgressing people and conquers it. "I will be his father and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men," God says.<sup>2</sup> When Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, passed in triumph over the land of Judah,

<sup>1</sup> Am. iv. 6-11; Ezek. xiv. 21, 13-19.

<sup>2</sup> II Sam. vii. 14.



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wasting cities and taking captive the inhabitants, God through Isaiah speaks (as if personally to the Assyrian king): "Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps." \* "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy." † "Assyria is the rod of the anger of God," ‡ a "razor that is hired beyond the river," § an "axe by which He heweth, a saw by which He saweth, a rod which He lifteth up." Conversely, Cyrus delivering the Hebrews from the Babylonian captivity is a beneficent instrument in the hands of God, fulfilling his commandments, "a ravenous bird from the east" to whom the nations were subdued for Jacob and for Israel's sake. In this fashion was the history of the people chronicled in the Bible. Even in the most ancient parts of the Old Testament, ascribed by some scholars to the thirteenth century B. C., as in the song of Deborah, it is said: "They chose new gods, then was war in the

\* II Kin. xix. 25.

† Isa. vii. 20.

‡ Isa. liv. 16.

§ Isa. xlv; xlv. 11; xlviii. 15.

¶ Isa. x. 5-6.

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gates.”<sup>8</sup> And this becomes a stereotyped formula: “And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord . . . and the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.”<sup>9</sup> “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years”;<sup>10</sup> “and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael”;<sup>11</sup> and thus it goes on every page of the chronicles. When there are no racial enemies at hand to do his bidding, God sends wild beasts against the transgressors. The heathen population, settled by the king of Assyria in the cities of Samaria in the stead of the Israelites who had been carried captive to Assyria, did not fear God, as might have been expected; the Lord therefore “sent lions among them, which slew some of them.”<sup>12</sup> God sends drought on the fields of the wicked, and thus the land and all the dumb creatures on it suffer for the sin of man. The locust, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar are the “great army of God” at his disposal against the impious.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Judg. v. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Judg. x. 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Judg. vi. 1.

<sup>11</sup> II Kin. xiii. 3.

<sup>12</sup> II Kin. xvii. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Joel ii. 25.

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Hosea prophesies with assurance and sees no reason to explain any strangeness in his prophecy: "As there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in Israel—therefore shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away."<sup>14</sup> Jeremiah asks God: "How long shall the land mourn, the beasts and the birds perish, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?"<sup>15</sup> And he describes how the ground was chapt for want of rain, how the wells were dried up, the hind had calved in the field and forsaken her little ones because there was no grass; wild asses did stand in the high places with failing eyes, and snuffed up the wind like dragons.<sup>16</sup> In the same definite way the opposites of these misfortunes are chronicled when the people fulfill the commands of God, and love Him, and serve Him. Then God gives the rain in due season and bread to the full, and grass for the cattle, and evil beasts hide in their lairs off the land; God will be with Israel against their enemies, five men will chase a hundred foes, and one hundred will put ten thousand to flight.<sup>17</sup> Hosea proph-

<sup>14</sup> Hos. iv. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. xii. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Jer. xiv. 4-6.

<sup>17</sup> Deut. xi. 13-15; xxviii; Lev. xxvi. 3-10.

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esies: "When Israel returns to the Lord, He will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with creeping things of the ground, and He will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely."<sup>18</sup> Joel exhorts the people: Let every one cry in homage to God, then God will send corn, and wine, and oil, and the enemies will be removed far off from them. "Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things; be not afraid, ye beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength."<sup>19</sup> Such are the assertions of the prophets. The modern man asks with surprise: was there any sound meaning or substance in this belief of the Hebrews?

There is sense in it, both simple and profound. It flashes out here and there in the Scriptures; at certain moments it flames up brilliantly, especially in the prophets. Jeremiah<sup>20</sup> calls the perdition, which God sends on Israel, "the fruit of their thoughts." Joshua<sup>21</sup> threatens Israel saying: "If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these

<sup>18</sup> Hos. ii. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Joel. ii. 19-22.

<sup>20</sup> Jer. vi. 19.

<sup>21</sup> Jos. xxiii. 12-13.

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nations, even these that remain among you, and make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you . . . they shall be snares and traps unto you . . . until ye perish from off this land," and we can at once conceive in what sense these men understood the law of retaliation. No doubt, in its pure and primitive form this belief was and remained transparently clear of perception, until the people covered it from sight with a crust of superstition: it merely expressed a psychological law of experience universally intelligible. God's punishment does not originate as well as fall upon the sinner from above; it is born in man himself and rises over him, like the evaporation of the waters on the earth gathering in the storm cloud above. The punishment is not a miracle, but a fruit of the spirit natural to the spirit dimmed by iniquity. Nothing but faith in the true God provides a man with spiritual health; the man in good spiritual health lives in an orderly way, in accordance with nature; all his mental faculties work correctly, his eye is clear and acute, his observations exact, his generalizations accurate, he judges according to reason and decides correctly. Or, rather, he can divine at every instant what is right and possible in virtue of his intuition of the truth: therefore, his life is well laid out and he suc-

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ceeds in everything. On the other hand, the instant the prime motor of the spirit, faith in God, has been lost out of a man, it is in vain that he tries to find his way which he has also lost in a tempest of passions and a whirl of anxiety. Dark, spasmlike feelings interfere with his powers of perception; he has eyes but does not see, has ears and does not hear, his experience is false experience, his foresight is but a raving, every design of his own crosses things actual and possible, and is therefore doomed to ruin and failure. This going to the bad is true of a single man or an entire people: man bears within himself the conditions of his fate in the world. Fear not, Jacob, nor thou worm Israel, the fainthearted, says the second Isaiah: do you as a whole people merely turn to God, and you will become "a sharp threshing instrument having teeth; you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff, you shall fan them, and the wind shall carry them away."<sup>22</sup> For God gives power to the feeble, He increases strength in them who have not might, "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be

<sup>22</sup> Isa. xli. 14-16.

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weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”<sup>23</sup> The same principle is preached by Hosea: “Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God . . .,” —and God says in turn, “I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.”<sup>24</sup> The same law also holds negatively: as soon as the bulk of the people turn away from God, they are inevitably smitten and mentally distraught and enfeebled, they become “as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney”;<sup>25</sup> then “the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself.”<sup>26</sup> It was this state of affairs that the enemy eagerly waited for: a nation uncemented by faith, a crowd of demoralized people, who are “dismayed and confounded,”<sup>27</sup> is a dainty prey to the conquerors. Their weakness entices and encourages the enemy from afar, as the scent of carrion attracts the falcon, as the sickly look of the prey inspires the ravisher with courage to attack it. The

<sup>23</sup> Isa. xl. 29-31.      <sup>24</sup> Hos. xiv. 5-6.      <sup>25</sup> Hos. xiii. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Am. ii. 14-15.      <sup>27</sup> Isa. xxxvii. 27.

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impious people is like "the grass of the field, as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it grows up." <sup>22</sup> The clash of the marching enemy is already to be heard, and they hear it not, "for the heart of the people becomes fat, and their ears heavy, and shut are the eyes lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart," <sup>23</sup> and the enemy comes swiftly from the ends of the earth, "none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken; their arrows are sharp and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind; their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it." <sup>24</sup> This is the plain meaning of the verse in Deborah's song: "They chose new gods, then was war in the gates," and of the formula of the records of the chroniclers repeated many a time: the children of Israel began again to do evil in the sight of the Lord, and He delivered them into the hands of the Philistines, Ammonites, or Midianites. Therefore, God

<sup>22</sup> II Kin. xix. 26; Isa. xxxvii. 27.

<sup>23</sup> Isa. v. 26-29.

<sup>24</sup> Isa. vi. 10.



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unalterably repeats to Israel, through the prophets, the one message: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live," <sup>31</sup> or "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." <sup>32</sup> According to the Old Testament, in addition to the invasion of enemies, every other calamity in life is either born of pusillanimity or through it becomes pernicious.<sup>33</sup> The same people when emboldened by faith will decimate and prevent ravenous beasts from multiplying on their own soil, stop the rivers from drying up, accommodate themselves to a season of rain, or prevail over a bad harvest. The pastures in their land will be covered with grass, and the cane will not wither, thus even the land will be blessed for the righteousness of its inhabitants, and the beasts, the birds, the fishes will prosper; in a word, the key to everything that happens on earth lies hidden in man's soul. The course of history is entirely determined by the state of the human soul, well with man if it is healthy and in harmony with law, or quite otherwise if it is not; that is to say, all hinges on whether the vital core, faith in the true God, has been kept or lost.

What then is this core of the human soul? What is God by constitution, and the make-up of this belief in Him? The first Psalm, the one

<sup>31</sup> Am. v. 4-6.

<sup>32</sup> Hos. xiii. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Jer. xvii. 5-7.

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beginning with the words: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," gives a plain answer to this double question. It defines faith in a purely psychological manner: the believer differs from the non-believer in the make-up of his mental life. The mental life of the faithful translates itself into deed and practice lawfully; thus all feelings and promptings on which it acts prove substantial, solid and concrete in the event. Taken together, they all arrange themselves in a coöperative order; therefore, the total effect is one of propriety and success. But in the absence of faith, there is no mental composure, feelings and thoughts are fitful, unsubstantial and crooked like disordered dreams or boisterous phantoms. The first Psalm proclaims this law in regard to the normal state of a believing soul, conferring regularity on the mental life: "The righteous shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The ungodly are not so: "they are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." The same idea of the office and work of faith was held by all the prophets, who found it in the depth of the national spirit and brought it to the surface and saw that it was made known.

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There are two truths, the prophets say: a divine, a real truth on the one hand, and a human competitor, a false truth on the other hand; an objective truth, a single truth valid for everybody, and a speculative truth, personal to every individual. Righteousness means living in accordance with the divine truth, and is determined by the following precepts: "to fear God," "to serve God," "to hear the voice of God," "to follow God," "to walk before God with the whole heart," "to walk in God's sight with a pure heart," "to walk in the ways of God," "to do what is pleasing in the eyes of God." The meaning of all these terms is: renunciation of one's own will. What God needs from man means renunciation for man. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." <sup>34</sup> On the contrary, the only sin of man is to take advantage of his liberty and live up to his will, "to follow one's own spirit," <sup>35</sup> "to go on frowardly in the way of his heart," <sup>36</sup> "to choose one's own ways," <sup>37</sup> "to judge after the sight of the eyes," <sup>38</sup> "to walk after the imagination of one's own heart" <sup>39</sup>—this is chief of the most grievous sins, the mortal sin which is intolerable to God. God promised

<sup>34</sup> Isa. lxvi. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Isa. lvii. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Isa. xi. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ezek. xiii. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Isa. lxvii. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Jer. ix. 14.

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to Gideon a victory over the Midianites, and Gideon marched out with all his troops, and God said to him: "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hands saved me"; and when Gideon, according to God's word, picked out ten thousand men, God yet found this number too large, and ordered him to make a second selection, until those who remained were only three hundred men. "By the three hundred men I will save you." <sup>40</sup> And it was a grace that Israel was saved in this way by God from the sin of vainglory, for God has no forgiveness, nor mercy for this sin. The king of Assyria is the rod of the wrath of the Lord, the executioner in reality of God's reply to slights received by Him from Israel, but the Assyrian thinks he himself is the doer of his deeds. He says: By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent; I have removed the bounds of nations and robbed treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man. And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth, and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or

<sup>40</sup> Judg. vii. 2-7.

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peeped. But note that after the king of Assyria has fulfilled his task, God will say: "I will see the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks," and He continues: "Shall the axe boast itself against him that shaketh it?" For such arrogance, God puts a hook in the nose, and a bridle on the lips of the king of Assyria, and will turn him back by the way which he came, and later on the king shall be visited with a terrible punishment so that nothing "from soul to body" shall be spared in him.<sup>41</sup> God, through the mouth of the prophet Zaphaniah, threatens: "He will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart: "The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil,"<sup>42</sup> therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation.

According to the Old Testament, the ability to tell the points of the compass of righteousness is an innate instinct, a sixth sense. Man is able to tell God's judgments, as the stork in the heaven her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and swallow observe the time of their coming.<sup>43</sup> The all-sufficient guide for man's life is belief in the existence and om-

<sup>41</sup> Isa. x. 5-19; xxxvii. 22-29.

<sup>42</sup> Jer. viii. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Zeph. i. 12-13.

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nipotence of God, trust in God, and not in earthly powers or in one's own skill, holding every success or misfortune not as due to chance or human calculations, but as an outcome of God's will, which it really is. This enables the believer to live at ease, and simply, like a tree or a bird, for believing is the state of man's soul in perfect correspondence with his nature. Faith guides him with certainty on the ways of life, he never knows the pangs of irresolution, nor does he hesitate at any stage of an important design; he instantly chooses by a method that operates like a sound instinct of scent, and is inflexibly resolute. Therefore Isaiah says: "The way of the just is uprightness; thou, most upright, doth weigh (in advance and, of course, mindful of all contingencies) the path of the just; thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." <sup>44</sup> But the self-righteous, on the contrary, are looking for a direct way in vain; they turn irresolute, vacillate, and unceasingly try again and again to mend their miscalculations: "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little, that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken," <sup>45</sup> or as the second Isaiah says: "Thy wisdom and

<sup>44</sup> Isa. xxvi. 7; 3.

<sup>45</sup> Isa. xxviii. 13.

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thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.”<sup>46</sup>

The instinct of faith, which holds men to the homage of obedience to God, is innate in man, but, as we know, so is the contrary instinct—that of self-will; it is his freedom of choice in his decisions in regard to his courses of action which, from the creation of Adam, has always been luring him to apostasy. At this point the profoundest depth of the Biblical teaching is unfolded. In the thought of the Old Testament, God is personally, as it were vitally, concerned with this one purpose: to insure that mankind shall be wholly and irrevocably obedient to Him. God’s unchangeable purpose, or, in other words, the predestined law of the universe, decrees that the dualism resulting from the two principles within man’s soul must cease. Personality as an independent will to have its own way has to be extinguished, and man must become only the receiver and performer of God’s commands. That does not mean that man is to become a pawn or puppet: God himself put into man a free will, for man is of value to God only when he freely consents so to be. God has set man over all his creatures to be a voluntary good steward of his intentions,

<sup>46</sup> Isa. xlvii. 10.

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like a landlord who acquires ploughs and oxen, but sets over them a workman whom he delegates to plough with them and manage the landlord's estate to their mutual advantage. To fill the requirements of the task to be performed, God needs men of intent purpose, initiative, and adaptability who will yet ungrudgingly act as agents for Him. Man's destiny is neither to become a self-appointed master setting himself his own tasks, nor to become a mechanical tool arbitrarily used here and there, but a diligent and skilled administrator, fully satisfied to act thus as a deputy. In this sense the second Isaiah calls the righteous man "a servant of God" (*ebed*), which may be exactly translated by the words "man working for God."



## CHAPTER VI

### THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION

THUS, the destiny of the whole universe is being wrought out in what goes on in the soul of man; therefore, for the sin of man all living creatures perish in the flood, and for every transgression of Israel, the earth, animals, and plants have to suffer as a means of making him suffer. But the way of mankind, and keeping step with it, that of the universe, is blocked out from the beginning: man is intended to travel a road that leads from an initial free will towards self-renunciation. God plies him with strong persuasions, as a man leading an ox by a rope whips the stubborn beast. Indeed, the history of mankind is literally pedagogical in character. The cosmos, depending for its fate entirely on the attitude of the human soul, has itself trained the soul, which it created, in the right general direction by means of the element common to them both—by its manipulations of matter, that is

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of the body. Thus, the cosmos teaches man what is to be done both by its approving "yes," followed by the welfare of the body, and by its guiding "no," followed by sickness, hunger, and the misfortunes accompanying the invasion of enemies. This idea runs with striking consistency through the whole of the Old Testament; the idea of an education of the soul as the object, and the whole of history as the means. The Biblical history of Israel is one great parable myth, expounding by appropriate images how God taught Israel to walk in the right way, safeguarded him from self-will by exhortation and the threats of the prophets, rewarded him on the rare occasions of his obedience, but mainly, how dreadful were God's retorts to man for his ceaseless apostasy.

At first God taught by object lessons lovingly. God does not conceal anything from Moses; He discloses openly to him his purpose: I shall harden the heart of Pharaoh, that he will not agree to let you go, thus I shall show my great signs before him and make him compliant,—and I shall do so in order to make Israel, seeing these miracles, believe in me, "that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have

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done among them; that ye may know how that I am the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> And a second time, and a third time, and a fourth time he hardened the heart of Pharaoh to the same end, as He says to Moses: “Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.”<sup>2</sup> Thus He had, in a tutorial manner, “got Him honor upon Pharaoh,”<sup>3</sup> and from the first the after results came up to the expectations beforehand. “And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.”<sup>4</sup> Later on, He led the Hebrews forty years through the wilderness, always giving them instruction by wonders, and occasionally He put them upon their mettle—whether they believed or not. He gave them manna on condition they should store it but for one day, “that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no”;<sup>5</sup> again, He left a few of the inhabitants in Canaan in order “to prove by them Israel, to know whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep, or not.”<sup>6</sup> In accordance with the same program of instruction, the entry of

<sup>1</sup> Exod. x. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xi. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. xiv. 4; 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. xiv. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Exod. xvi. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Judg. ii. 21-22; iii. 4.

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Israel into the Promised Land was accompanied by wonders, which were announced by God to his confidant, Moses, "Behold I make a covenant, before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people, among which thou art, shall see the work of the Lord"; He will give to Israel a victory over seven nations greater and mightier than they.<sup>7</sup> Then comes the time of Joshua, and God keeps on performing miracles for Israel, leading them through the Jordan on dry land, and so on, all to the end "that ye might fear the Lord your God forever."<sup>8</sup> And, at last, a general conclusion closes the profound and thoughtful parable myth of the Exodus: "Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it." . . . Know that all this was done by God, "that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God; there is none else beside Him."<sup>9</sup> "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what

<sup>7</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 10-11; Deut. vii. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Deut. iv. 32-38.

<sup>8</sup> Josh. iv. 24.

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was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to fear Him.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, we see that from the very outset, with his whole power and will, God starts a school. But the same scholastic program of Israel's training by God is continued in the whole of the further narrative of the Old Testament. All the peculiarities of the nation's fate are shaped to form a series of lessons, rewards, and punishments, by which God as the tutor guides the pupil; and the prophets unceasingly hammer that very conception of history into the minds of their hearers.

There are in this magnificently coherent story two persons clearly sketched in indelible lines and undimming colors, two martyrs who are broken by the tragical struggle. A giant—fiery,

<sup>10</sup> Deut. viii. 2-6.

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passionate, unrestrainable, wrathful, impatient—the tutor, who is destined to employ every means open to Him to instruct the pupil in the complicated and difficult art expected of him; and the tiny pupil, a stubborn and cunning being, who wishes to learn in a way, but despises himself, and the tutor and the process of learning. This pupil is represented by the Old Testament to be Israel; and the second Isaiah, in an unparalleled vision, conceived a universal mission as the fate of his people. This ideal as well as all the rest of the thoughts of the prophets was merely an outcome of the philosophy of history ingrained in Judaism long before the time of the second Isaiah. Israel is the pupil, subject to the direct instruction of God, in a school where there are many other pupil peoples; God chooses Israel for direct tutoring from among them in order by his example to teach all the other peoples; thus the dire visitations by which Israel is taught are a redeeming chastisement undergone for the whole of humanity. In time to come people will understand it and will say about Israel: “he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. . . . All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one

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to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." <sup>11</sup>

According to the doctrine of the Old Testament, the world outside man with all that it contains is moving to one definite goal; and it is by his own ascent that man impels and attracts the world outside himself. The world outside man matures within man in so far as man learns to hear and to incorporate in himself its unchangeable will, and not his own subjective will. Thus the world grows step by step toward a better equilibrium in and as every individual grows in this sense, and I in my person am responsible to it for my selfishness and disregard of it. The world will be ripe and full grown when man shall have become conjoint with it as a leg or arm is conjoint with, and a member of, the body, and shall have irrevocably renounced his own self-will but without giving up his own peculiar individuality because he has learned to be perfectly willing to do so. The world itself leads man toward this goal by instruction and correction or punishment, but, at last, violence on the one side and stubbornness on the other will be exchanged for concord; man will voluntarily renounce his will to differ. This is already ex-

<sup>11</sup> Isa. liii. 4-6.

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pressed by the Psalmist: "Be ye not as the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee."<sup>12</sup> A father beats his son for idling or for poor and careless work that he may learn his trade properly, but the end aimed at by him will be reached only when the son gets fond of the trade with his whole heart.

And the Old Testament is deeply convinced of ultimate success in this great undertaking. The prophets especially preach this historical optimism fervently: the will of the world shall become the acquired will and second nature to humanity; man shall become lit up by the light of God, and, together with Him, the whole earth will become illuminated. Take three notable witnesses: Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. "The day will come, says the Lord, when I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. *And I will put my spirit within you*, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do

<sup>12</sup> Ps. xxxii. 9.



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them.”<sup>13</sup> Through the mouth of Jeremiah God says: “Behold, the days come that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel; *I will put my law in their inward parts*, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”<sup>14</sup> And last, the famous prophecy, by Isaiah, of the kingdom of God on earth: when he who is full of the fear of the Lord, he to whom righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, will ascend the throne,—“the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*”<sup>15</sup> Although Isaiah does not expressly say so, it is quite clear from the context, that man

<sup>13</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27. <sup>14</sup> Jer. xxxi. 31-34. <sup>15</sup> Isa. xi. 1-9.

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will no longer suffer from worldly evils. What does this prove was their origin? They were God's punishment for iniquity or, in other words, the world's reaction in reply to man's self-willed conduct; but, now, man is full of the knowledge of the will of the world outside him and fulfills it with zeal. Hence, the world outside becomes at one with the world within man. The hearts of all peoples will be united by the ties that unite them to the world outside themselves, and the present separatism of the whole of creation will turn into a harmonious unity, and a universal prosperity will be established in the world.

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Now at last, having reached the culmination of the Hebrew religion, we are in a position to trace and grasp its origin and development—just as the budding and growth of a flower must wait for its full growth to be understood.

Whatever explanation may be given of the origin of religion, one point is incontestable: religion is the parent of a theoretic generalization of experience. Man must have arrived at some basic insight into the world before he clad what he thus sensed with the simplest religious form—the parable myth. In the hard struggle of existence man had to learn to live,

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and, in the act of doing so, he tested his observations with a passionate curiosity. The experience gained during these countless dark centuries little by little precipitated in the human mind a certain dim apprehension of the world scheme in its totality. And thus, at an advanced moment of history, not so very long before our era, religion comes into articulate being. At the beginning, self-expression for it begins and ends in a hypothesis explaining the world: a story about the structure and movement of the world as a whole. Its story will always be found to be more than a simple description: the unseizable immensity and complexity of the world can only be stated symbolically or in images. The contents of every mythology depend on the character of the particular community, for the myth is shaped collectively, or in other words: every mythology is stamped with national peculiarities.

From the very beginning a certain two conceptions arising in the human mind get embodied in myth; without them no kind of teleology would be possible. Furthermore, mythology identifies both conceptions as a single two-sided truth about the world. First, mythology holds that the world is not a disconnected multitude of automatic and independent phenomena (as probably the sensa-

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tions of animals are), but is an agglomeration of a few huge organisms. The development of a mythology proceeds on the lines laid down by an inevitable recognition of interactions between these organisms which become ever more subtle and comprehensive; at last, mythology attains its consummation: the idea of the world as an absolute unity. This supreme achievement in knowledge, which forestalled the latest conclusions of science by thousands of years, is the central idea in monotheism. In the same way the Hebrew religion was formed. The ancient God of the Hebrews is, primarily, a symbol of reality as a unitary system of forces. But primitive thought does more than advance in front of science by its integration of knowledge; it also anticipates, by dim but positive conclusions, the last deduction of philosophy. The cave man has certainly known, and always paid regard to, the law of gravitation, discovered by Newton, just as man, from time immemorial, has in his reasoning followed, though unconsciously, the truth regarding the subjectivity of man's comprehension of the world, of which so much was made by Kant and Schopenhauer. I do not perceive objects outside me, but traces and movements produced by them within me, my perceptions. Consequently, conceiving the world, man conceives

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but himself, and the known world is identical with man. From the very outset, the form of myth was defined by this dim conception; therefore every mythology must inevitably be anthropomorphic, and its model of the life of the world is unalterably represented in myth by manlike images. This second meaning of myth emerges more and more in the course of centuries: the two streams—the integration and the anthropomorphization—run in the same current. Both aspects are immediately realized in monotheism: finally the world was conceived as an absolute unity, and, at the same time, as a man absolute and perfect, standing outside of time. Nowhere does both this dual development and essence of religion jut out so clearly as in the Old Testament. God's autocracy is there unlimited, there cannot be any other gods beside Him, He is a "jealous God" to the point of melancholy, and, nevertheless, some kind of an ethereal image of man is discernible, as through a veil, within his all-embracing form. Therefore, the Bible asserts that man, of flesh and blood though he be, is the image and likeness of God, and on his side God unchangeably, in his appearance, assumes the guise of a man; thus, in the Old Testament, God's thought, temper, and conduct are entirely anthropomorphic.

Man thus conceived the world in a double

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manner: as a substance outside, and, at the same time, as an imprinted image within; and this double conception inevitably had to be personified in a symbol or model. It is a necessity of the human mind, in the case of emotions, to embody them: either in the material figures of the creative genius, or, if this be impossible, at least through the imagination, in order to set them forth as objects to muse on, as means for self-communion. Thus, both the figure and personality of God are merged in monotheism, God a real manlike being who is *sui generis*. In his full form, the monotheistic God contains two entities or two meanings; the world is represented by the person of God, universal, manlike, concrete: first, as a unity of powers acting in the world as their arena; and, secondly, as a logical materialization of the human spirit. The total meaning, which is immensely wide in its scope, was expressed in an almost visible image. This image nourishes the national soul, and this is the intellectual meaning to be extracted from it; but the bulk of the nation is sustained by it unconsciously—through the only concrete image of God accessible to them. And myth never dies in religion. The mythological image of a personal God can be discovered even in the most enlightened religious conscience, as the sun shines dimly but distinctly

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through the mist. This very image and nothing else radiates warmth and light unto the religious soul; to this image faith, hope, and worship are directed, and artists fresco it on the domes of temples.

And in this, the Hebrew religion represents the purest type of all religious cultures. The God of the Old Testament, among all the Gods of humanity, is the clearest symbol of the world, because He is of all Gods the least personified: He is rather akin to the elements than personal. Therefore, He has not a wife, nor helpers, nor a personal life, nor the attributes of dominion. Yet the personified image of God is the essence of the Hebrew religion. Its more ancient God, with that earlier face of a fiery element, still lives as a person in the minds of the prophets, and the ghost of Him, of course, lives still even to-day in the creed of a religious Jew.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GOD IDEAL OF THE PROPHETS

THE world was imagined by the nomads of the desert of Sinai as a wilderness, maelstrom and savagery of motion, as a tearing hurricane of fire. To be more precise: it was not the outer world which was thus conceived by them, but their own spirit, wild, flaming, and unbri-dled; the spirit within, the heart and receptacle of the world. The knowledge adored in the figure of the Biblical God may be thus formul-ated: the universe and the co-substantial human spirit are an untamed, fiery whirlwind. Historians are wrong when they explain that the Hebrew God was a highland God, a God of tempests, and of lightning. On the contrary, the national consciousness deduced its idea that God was on terms of companionship with the tempest, and fire as the mode of his manifesta-tion, from the universal essence of God, his flaming nature. "The spirit of God," the maker of everything, *ruah Elohim*, i. e., the imme-morial and eternal essence of the world, is fire,



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or, in other words, action as a potency. It is the nameless God, faceless, yet real, God rushing as a simoon in space, burning with fire, spurting forth smoke and burning coals, melting mountains, a God who is ferociously passionate, merciless, jealous, impatient, forgetful. Undoubtedly, this imagined figure attained the complexion just described only after a long search and period of ferment; it was shaped and molded as a result, on the one hand, of the people's own perceptions stored up, tested, and little by little brought to uniformity, and on the other, it was the result of the generalizations coming from without, elaborated in harmony with the national spirit. It does not matter of what fragments this figure was welded together, either national or foreign: the form given to it, in the oldest sections of the Bible, is incontestably a product of the Hebrew national spirit.

But pure contemplation is not natural to man. Even the primitive comprehension of the world is rather an explanation of it, and this inevitably implies an understanding of what should be, some legislative scheme of the world. Therefore, every religion is also statute law—even in its mythical phase; and the ancient Hebrew God is not simply a Lord, but also a universal legislator. He is the proto-type

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and emblem of the totality of forces in the universe—not at rest, for there is no rest in the world, but in ceaseless motion. In other words, God is the personification of those irrefutable seekings after improvement, of which man felt the urge in his spirit, and saw its token in an elemental capacity for progress manifest in his community. In this early period of history, the contemplative and explanatory element predominates over the legislative and moral contents of religion. The God of the nomads of Sinai, who had invaded Canaan, is mainly energy in his make-up. He already possesses a clear design or set of plans toward a realization of the scheme. The notion of a personal and universal perfection had already formed itself in the human spirit. But the struggle with nature without and within was yet too hard, and man was compelled for the time being to use all his perspicacity to discover the nearest realities. Activities were infinitely more vivid than potentialities. The principal service rendered by God to man was in supplying a chart of the world, a schematization of experiences verified. The parable myth by which these early men explained the world was to them like a map of an unknown city in the hands of a foreigner, a thing of inestimable practical value.

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But, in the course of time, necessity and its metes and bounds made itself felt; necessities and limitations to man's liberty grouped themselves into a system, tending to focus in a theory designed to account for them. Man got pent in a world of wild flames and through the flaming tongues, which were burning his body, became aware of the world's will. It became dimly apparent that the precepts imposed by the world are ratified by a compulsion from within, the duty imposed on man from without is identical with his advantage as perceived within. The world outside says: If you want to have health, peace, success, and luck—obey my rules, live in accordance with my will.

Primitive man could not help distinguishing the fact that some of his perceptions were subjective and false, while others were more objective and, therefore, bore the stamp of greater correctness. Similarly, his penetration into nature by his actions would be false or correct in accordance with the measure of objectivity of the determining clue. Thus, little by little, the idea was put together of the dualism of man: each feeling or desire contains something of the personal, the false, and something of the impersonal, outside world-truth. Consequently, empiric personality, containing false perceptions and arbitrary desires, is a falsehood and a

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bane; but there lurks in it an everlasting seed, the real "ego," the organ of the world-will implanted in man.

From the very beginning, the national mind of the Hebrews solved the problem thus raised, and the issue just joined, along very practical lines. The latitude allowed to his personal free will is not of advantage to man, and mere self-interest bids him obey the objective will of the spirit. The conclusion so formed is in accord with his own experience, which has already shown him that subjective feelings and promptings, owing to their falsehoods, inevitably prove repugnant to the will of the world, and the cause of failure. Man becomes, by his every act, more and more entangled and inwoven into the texture of the universe. The breath of his breathing, the food of his eating, the act of his hand is the world without and not within. He is but a channel through which the world outside circulates, the lever shifted by a world-will, a limb of the cosmos, as his leg is of his body. And in any case, manifest destiny says that the world will at last overcome the individual, *i.e.*, will endow man with its will. Objective reason will inevitably triumph over the aberrations of personal consciousness and freedom. This would give undisputed sway to the "Kingdom of God upon earth" foretold by the

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prophets. Thus, the seed of the legislation, originally deposited and implicit in the myth, ripened in its warm husk for centuries, and finally blossomed and became explicit. Little by little, the contemplative period, the mythological period of religion, passed and made way for the period of legislation.

The obligation imposed by the will of the world on man is doubly difficult. Amongst the immense multitude of passionate longings, to which he is liable, how can man manage to distinguish the proper and universal desires from the personal ones that are illicit according to the law of the world? Both were intertwined even in his commonest action. The world-will, acting through the instinct of hunger, bids man eat and even outlines the kind of food he shall eat. But within the circle thus outlined innumerable possibilities are left to man's choice. Here again, even in the limited freedom thus allowed man, a dangerous temptation lurks: a choice too subjective may easily prove an act of insubordination, and distress in punishment must inevitably follow. So, outside pressure and self-will are inseparably confused in every desire: the more complicated the desire, the greater the proportion and latitude of personal choice. The instinct of the truth of God, the voice of world-truth, rings feebly in the human

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soul; how then are we to find the right way? In the hard school of the practice of life, every personal bent is a "snare and trap" leading on to a long line of further ills, and the chain formed of single iniquities becomes strong enough to divert national life from the law. How dark and unknown is God's way! When can a man succeed in perceiving this way by an enlightenment of his heart, or a people even when instructed by prophets? The odds against success make the blood curdle in one's veins. How grievous the way! Freedom, though granted to man but sparsely, is precious: it is personal self-will limited by law or world-will. The brute beast seeks after satiety, man even on the verge of animal ravenousness still has traces of personal taste. With every step away from animal regularity in conformity that he takes, the personal in him grows more and more. How can he renounce it? He may perhaps prefer misery, sickness, even death to giving it up. Thus man, like a bad pupil, plays truant with God, turns himself away and is obstinate, but God smites him sorely, and clamors from above: "I have smitten with drought and starvation, yet ye have not returned unto me, I have sent among you the pestilence, your young men have I slain with the sword, I have overthrown some of your

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cities, yet have ye not returned unto me.”<sup>1</sup> And man, shaken and shattered by the chastisement, repents bitterly and sighs: “Why hast thou given me freedom, why hast thou not left me as a beast? and why didst thou not open for me thy ways?” Thus Jeremiah says: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”;<sup>2</sup> and on the same theme Isaiah says: “O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear?”<sup>3</sup> And the Psalmist, with an affecting simplicity, prays: “Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths”; “teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path”; “unite my (divided) heart to fear thy name.”<sup>4</sup>

The only tokens of God which no man might mistake were the national calamities, which in the prophets' interpretation showed what ought never to have been done. The same dilemmas of indecision occurred amongst the Hebrews as among every nation on earth and caused a great expansion of magic and divination, by which a people or individual extorted from God hints of what they were to do, and tried to guess his will through dreams or dark signs. But these chance and casual signs helped but

<sup>1</sup> Amos iv. 6-11.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lxiii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. x. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. xxv. 4; xxvii. 11; lxxxvi. 11.



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little, so many were there of these puzzling situations. This whole matter was too important, it touched life itself, welfare, personal and national, at too many points. At any cost it was necessary to trace out what to do and the means of doing it, where ignorance of God's way threatened calamity at any moment.

Humanity had stored up and thoroughly reviewed an immense experience by the time the Hebrew religion was formed. Man had already lived in communities, families, tribes, clans, states, for thousands of years. The art of common life had already been well elaborated, and its customs inrooted in personality as an inheritance. Religion and social order, which sprang from one root, had fused, mutually nourishing each other. It was not one man but many who discovered and thought out a wonderful theory, which they had all been acting on in practice: that the subjectivity of personal perceptions and desires is absorbed by collective experience, displaced by objective truth, that is world-truth domesticated in the human soul, truth purged from all subjective falsehood. If God is the center of life, human existence must lie on one of the circumferences, described from that center, which form the concentric system of the world; and this one circumference is undoubtedly confined to man-



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kind. By renouncing selfishness and self-will for the benefit of his neighbor or tribe, man fulfills his universal duty, and lives in accordance with the scheme of the cosmos. Here, both difficulties were overcome at once: the difficulty of acquiring the knowledge of what to do, and of its acceptance and fulfillment, for the tribe speaks to its member by a language readily understood, and its arguments are unanswerable, and not to be ignored by his inner sense. The tribe is infallible; being an instrument of the world-will, its will is true; but that holds only of the pure will of the tribe, of affirmations conformable to its essence. This pure will, free of every alloy of the subjective, is rooted in every member of the tribe, and has to be expressed by its common efforts or not at all. This will or genius differs, however, from the empirical will of the tribe, for that is nothing but the resultant of all the personal wills.

Thus morals are created in the course of the development of religion, which becomes aware of its essence through the moral feelings, evoked and cultivated by common life. Religion, recognizing its own face mirrored in morals, becomes inseparably welded to them. Therefore, there is not, and there never has been, any religion that does not dig a channel for

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morals and law. Everywhere morals and law were originally fed and nursed by religious thought, obtaining from it their contents and compulsion. A hierarchy of authorities, one below the other, becomes solidly established: the universal will bridles the single personality through the objective reason and will of the tribe, and, in reverse, the single personality fulfills the world-plan for it, by yielding to the commands of the tribe. This is the moral teaching of the Biblical parable myth of the covenant between God and Israel: God can only arrive at the largest amplitude of his existence by the efforts to that end, freely exerted, of the one only rational creature—man. Thus, God instructs man's reason and incites his will into the proper channel through the mediator natural and nearest to the individual—through the tribe.

The Hebrew people proceeded on this same path, the way of every religion, from a metaphysical parable myth to morals. As long as the mythological element in religion prevailed over the moral, and God appeared as a world-being separate and isolate from the individual, man considered his relation to God as mechanical: as the relation of a vassal to his sovereign. At that time God required of man only belief and fear; the only obligation which

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the religious consciousness had put on man was to express his allegiance to God by praise and offerings; the latter being a homage or tribute, both material and symbolic, to his dignity. But when the law of the world was conceived by man not only as the law of the outer world, but also as the inner law, as a norm of the human mind, the formal tribute lost its meaning. It grew clear that God concretely requires the entire will of man as it is, with its power to differ; man can fulfill his duty to the will of the world not merely by the acknowledgment of his allegiance to that world-will, nor by symbolical tributes, but must also render a true, real service to the will of the world by exchanging his will to differ for a preference to conform, fulfilling its law in every act.

This moral idea of the Hebrew religion was expounded by Biblical prophecy, beginning with Amos, the first of the great prophets. All these prophets say one thing: it is now insufficient to fulfill the external service to God, as if it came from men who could give it and then go about their own business. God does not want the material tribute, a sacrifice; not a fragment, but the whole personality must be dedicated to God. In other words: man and God are not two separate beings, but God is

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the purest and most real essence of the human spirit.

God says through Amos: "I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." <sup>5</sup> God says the same through Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the father-

<sup>5</sup> Amos v. 21-24.

## THE GOD IDEAL OF THE PROPHETS

less, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." \* Micah says: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." † This positive demand of God "to love the good" is defined by all of them as a self-renunciation of his own preferences by the individual in active service to the will and wish of the tribe: "Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke; deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked, cover him, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh." \* "If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and

\* Isa. i. 11 ff.

† Mic. vi. 6-8.

\* Isa. lviii. 6-7.

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his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever." \* "He who hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,—he is just." <sup>10</sup>

It might well occur to some readers to ask what the God that has been discussed has to do with the weights of a merchant, whether they are true, or with a loan, whether it is at interest or a gift? There is no doubt that the God akin to one of the elements, who had as a fiery whirlwind rolled through the world, would not have discharged his wrath upon usurers, but it is no mere accident that such things did not then exist. God has changed very much together with the community. Now He is a hundredfold more severe on man, and looks acutely into every individual's soul. He has

\* Jer. vii. 5-7.

<sup>10</sup> Ezek. xviii. 7-8.

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learnt better how to understand his due: Man must really work for Him, and do it with his whole will. But in his nature, He has remained just the same God. He always was: the reality of the world as a whole. In every line, the prophets witness that morals are not merely earthly, do not merely touch relations between men; morals are religious no less—even more—than offerings. By moral conduct, man fulfills his cosmic destiny; and the cosmos really requires from him “the good,” and punishes moral transgression by death. Therefore, the prophets unceasingly repeat that there is practical advantage not only in piety, for that had been said by their early predecessors, but chiefly now in morals. Amos literally says: “Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them, ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live.”<sup>11</sup> Isaiah says: “Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow,” and adds, “if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land, but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath

<sup>11</sup> Amos. v. 11-14.

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spoken it.”<sup>18</sup> Thus it is on every page of the prophetic books. The prophets teach the people not simply as men in their own names, but something more: God himself unalterably requires justice, honesty, charity, and mercy for the debtor; He needs them for the accomplishment of his own world-work. If you want to live in prosperity, renounce your personal will, yield to the will of the world, expressed in the genius of the tribe. The personal will, as the will to differ, is false, that of the tribe is true, is in accordance with the world’s will. But if you persist in your arbitrary will to differ, then know: you are entirely at the mercy of the world and its disposition to make it cost you dear; and you will, sooner or later, through the hostile blows of its forces, come to think better of your conduct, and exchange the will to differ for a preference to conform to the tribal injunctions of the one law of the world.

<sup>18</sup> Isa. 1. 17-20.



## CHAPTER VIII

### GOD AND HUMANITY

EXTERNALLY there was no change in the Hebrew religion. The personified image of God stands as before high overhead: the same hierarchy, prayers, drink offerings, burnt offerings, and feasts. But, internally, the God of Amos and of the second Isaiah is very distinct from the God of Deborah. Five centuries had deepened and strengthened the discernment of the people. The earlier, heavily drawn picture of reality faded out, and laid bare the features of the world as it ought to be, the world made perfect. The dynamic aspect of life so unrestrainable became ever more clear to the spirit as it unfolded itself and entered the consciousness of man, and was born in the manifestations of his genius. The existing world at any given moment is but a phantom and a lie, an instantaneous glimpse of a mysteriously predestined growth as yet only in process; in the world now existing, it is not the material reality that is substantial, but the tendency, the

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destiny in front of it. Consequently, the world is an oak in the acorn affair, coming lawfully and irrevocably into ever completer existence, or, according to the term of the old parable myth, a design of God. This design is to be worked out gradually by all the ingredients and processes of the world and, amongst them, by man and his diverse activity. The natural form of man's living is to run itself into the mold of the world's design, neither to resist it nor to be indolent about it: thus man becomes fine and healthy. And on the other hand, disobedience to the world's law is an unnatural way of living. The life of the undutiful man admits of no justification, is devoid of sense, and the will of the world will inevitably throw him away as a harmful and useless thing, no longer feeding or protecting him, but smiting him in anger, and urging him either to destruction or to recantation.

Such are the contents of the Biblical religion in its second period, the moral period. Moreover, it remained the same as before—a manual of life, the most important of man's possessions. Since his first flashes of consciousness, man had been seeking after one goal; conscience itself was born in, and will always be occupied with, this one problem: how is man to live with an immense contradiction ferment-

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ing away in his own desires, or, in other words, between the will of the world and his will to differ? And storing up knowledge, man from time to time reduced his experiences to systems of practice, which could be conveniently surveyed and recollected; such were his first parable myths. Gradually, man corrected these parable myths of his, amended and complicated them, without however changing the ground plan, for the design or pattern of the world was faithfully outlined in the parable myth from the very outset. Religion was a schematized and intelligible manual of the general rules of life, much the same as though a man had been taught only the principles of a craft, all the rest being left to his own zeal and native faculty. Where the religion of the patriarchs only hinted at the general rules for the practice of life, the religion of the prophets provided a much clearer and more circumstantial manual.

The ancient God of the Hebrews personified the conscience of a semisavage spirit, conceiving itself as a center and type of the will of the world, as an untamed energy which as yet knew no law. The will of the world had only one command for man: know and remember that you are in me, created by me and subsist through me; otherwise your every design will

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fail, and your every deed turn to your ruin. Therefore, the ancient God mainly requires homage from all men, respect, and fear. He is a-moral, as was the human spirit of the time. He had no scruples about tempting men, defrauding them to their doom. His cruelty is measureless: the pages of the chronicles are soaked in tales of blood shed by Him or at his commands. He is arbitrary and absolute, not at all fastidious as to means; He has but one law—the will or pattern of the world, which had not yet been analyzed, however, into its components: to Him all means are fair for compelling man to exchange his will to differ for a preference to conform to that design or pattern.

This demand forever remains the principal claim insisted upon by religion; it represents man's fundamental and most generalized knowledge of the world, and his place in it: the world as a whole is the only reality, the individual is so far real and, in consequence, justified and happy, as he exchanges his will to differ for a preference to conform to the world's single law. Therefore the prophets are always preaching man's love of God and fear of Him, as the first rule for the practice of life in accordance with the cosmic design. The fear of God is a guide like the compass at sea: the soul must be

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steered to the all-embracing perfection of the world—God—as its port or destination.

But now that the compass by itself had ceased to be man's sole dependence, now that the sea had been thoroughly explored, and the channel for the right practice of human life had been discovered: steer midstream! The former demand—Obey the law of the world, the will of God—was supplemented by another, and even clearer law: Obey the human statute of the world's law—in the mind of the race. God is conceived as before: as a personification, as a universal being distinguishable from the world. This indicates that man continues to perceive the world as a target of his attention and the avenue of his influence, the world which lies outside himself and is not dependent on him; and that, at the same time, he conceives God's will as the racial will of man, supreme over men's personal wills. God became man: that is, man conceived the regulating set of his racial spirit as one with that of the universe. In this incarnated form the personification of God provided the material for an august tragedy. God as a symbol of reality, only to be contemplated, was, of course, magnificent and tranquil in his autocracy. But this first period now lay in the dead past; the Hebrew people then living could not

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even remember it. At the dawn of consciousness, God is already a God of motion, insistence, and dominance; religion is already an embryonic legislation; but God's desire for comity with men means—it is not his yet; therefore, desire is suffering. God wants to identify man's will with his; being apart from man, He might fuse in alliance with him, but man in his stubbornness secludes himself; God in vain knocks at man's heart, persuading and threatening, and enduring meanwhile a grievous martyrdom, for his own predetermined will is to become united with man; it is the destiny of his very essence. God must disappear as an incarnate image, but the whole of his essence must fill up and tincture the human mind; this essence suffering a transmutation there into the ultimate scheme of the world's perfection, and the knowledge of the means of its realization, and an endless supply of energy entirely devoted to that end. The world is not a reality, and the commotion of its existence is, therefore, without spot or oasis of rest; the world is only an idea, an immanence of existence. The world's life is an endless aspiration, a sadness, and a suffering. The world is sick at its very heart—*i.e.*, in man; therefore God's way through history is a way of suffering. His ceaseless complaints in the prophets always ring the changes on a

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great woe: man disdains Him, does not fulfill his commands. The God-world calls heaven and earth to be witnesses: who but He created and fostered man? "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know."<sup>1</sup> He asks with a bitter perplexity: "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?"<sup>2</sup> By what plague must they be visited over again? How can they be taught? The sixth chapter of Micah depicts God's contention with Israel in magnificent lines, full of the whole pain of the universe: "Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and He will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me."

God asks for so little, only the will of man willingly surrendered. What is righteousness?—Man's practice of life, regular and cosmic, in accordance with his own well-being and prosperity. What is required for success in attaining the end of righteousness?—First, a consciousness open to nature, not closed to the universe; and secondly, the moral conduct of men in their social life. "He hath shewed thee,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. ii. 5.

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O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee: but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." \*

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A small people in a tiny country, which was surrounded by the huge empires of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt, started and carried on and accomplished, like a scientist in his laboratory, the very task set to mankind. They did it really for themselves, but they knew that it was also done for the benefit of the whole of humanity, and therefore they felt themselves a people chosen of God; a people understanding that their national achievement had a significance for universal history. Life is a complicated and dangerous art like playing with firearms. The least mistake may cause grievous injuries, pain, and death; ignorance or forgetfulness, hurry or negligence result in certain ruin. And since every one ever born is destined to live, nothing is more important to man than to study the art of life, to learn the nature of the explosives which he must handle, and to discover their proper modes of manipulation.

I am surrounded by a countless multitude of creatures, every one of them an individual aiming at the preservation of his own life at

\* Mic. vi. 8.



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the expense of all the others. There is in every individual magazine an explosive—his will; I also have my share, but do not know all the points at which combustion may take place. Moreover, an explosion taking place in one man may also spread among others: I myself every minute, by discharges of the unknown explosive in me, my will, set off explosions around me; just as the explosions of my fellow creatures in a state of eruption permanently wound me, and threaten to destroy me. Even the cave men knew some of the ways well enough to manipulate the explosives stored in nature and in their own spirits. Every religion is a summary of such knowledge, and therefore there is no nation without a religion. But the Hebrew people was the first to define comprehensively and with a clear-eyed consciousness the task of human reason: the particular and discreet acquaintance with the matter acquired by one experience and then another is insufficient; rule of thumb methods must go and a systematized course must be arranged on a universal scale. And this people ventured on that gigantic task without waiting for the others to coöperate; the goal was the salvation of humanity; they flung themselves into the work and fulfilled it as best they could,—in any case, with the greatest zeal and most steadfast

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courage. According to the description of Isaiah, they were entirely, "from the sole of the foot unto the head," covered with wounds from the explosions which they underwent within and without. The precious knowledge acquired by them through such dangerous experiences is an asset of the whole of humanity; to it the writer of these lines is indebted to a large extent, and so are you who are reading this book, some washerwoman also at Moscow, some waiter in a Berlin café, every member of the House of Commons and the American Congress—we all are indebted to it for the fact that our lives, spent in work in a manufactory of explosives, have become less perilous.

The Hebrew people irrefutably proved (as more or less all other religions also did) the soundness of three theses. First, the composition of the explosive—the will—is the same in all creatures in the world, in spite of the variety of their forms and manifestations. Secondly, the human will is the most concentrated and thus the most efficient kind of this one explosive substance, the will. And thirdly, man is the sole creature who is able, and is therefore destined, to harmonize the disorder and lack of reciprocity in the use of these explosives going on in creation. Man's spirit, the seat of the strongest sample of the world-explosive,

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detonates throughout the world. If only civil strife between his internal explosions ceases and they become harmonious, they will send a harmonious echo reverberating through the world. Therefore, the gradual good ordering of them, as the breaking of the most impetuous force to bit and bridle, means a reordering of the whole explosive system of the universe, the creation of a clash-proof system of will. Whatever there is of concentration of the world-will in the human spirit, gets registered in and as the reason, the consciousness of will; by virtue of this consciousness thus vouched for, man is able to bridle his will—that is, to bring order first into his own explosiveness and then into that of the world. But personality as it is throughout creation is, in its nature, given to giving the rein to the will to differ. The community is the natural training school, teaching the individual how to introduce better order among his internal explosions. It is the racial reason, and not the personal, which supplies the right background of theory as to which desires and feelings are appropriate, and which are not. As soon as any one's personality acquires in this school the art of appropriate explosiveness in human intercourse, it becomes able to produce explosions harmonious among themselves, and thus makes its contribution of

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order to the world. All these three theses may be generalized into one: the world does not move toward a dead life without explosions, without will (as is, for instance, the doctrine of Buddhism), but it moves toward a living system of clash-proof explosions. In all creation, none but man is predestined to establish harmony in place of conflict in the world; and therefore the world provided him with the spirit, an instrument necessary for this work. The God-world originally created man in his likeness and image that man might "in the fullness of time" change the world into a new and a better one, thus finally creating, in the sense of completing, God. Then the dualism of object and subject will exist no more: the will of the world will be inseparably merged with that of man, man and God shall become one.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

OUR inquiry into the Biblical religion has shown that the exchange of the will to differ for the preference to conform as the right idea of man's proper conduct—as the unalterable condition of his prosperity—is the key to faith, the essence of religion. Religion was found to be the systematized method by which such appropriate conduct was secured in the practice of life.

We have seen that religion offers two means to man for the attainment of this aim: first, man has to hold his consciousness open cosmically, and not let it be penned within the subjective bounds of humanity; and secondly, to hold it open within this wide circumference in the social sense, not to close it by selfishness at the bidding of self-aggrandizement. The first demand is the mother of the metaphysical content of religion (love and fear God); the second, of the ethical content (be merciful, love your neighbor). Both demands are essentially

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negative. Religion is always negative; it steers man from his own *culs-de-sac* on the road of freedom, and up to ever more remunerative freedom; it teaches man how to renounce an obstinate seclusion. What he will be when free, religion does not say; it gives no indications of what the glories of the free life to come will be like. Take down your selfish fence, and enter through the gate of humanity the world-life. Then the world-will, which unrestrainably circulates in some small trickle in you anyway, will by the fuller sweep given to it infallibly direct your steps in the single movement of all creation toward an unknown perfection.

To hold the mind open to the cosmic influence, one must always remember the natural unity concealed within the apparent diversity of the world, must become accustomed to an instinct which will insist that every action be defined not only by its direct causality, but by the unsurveyable multitude of forces and actions by which the world-life is formed. Positive reason, on the contrary, pays regard only to the separate chains of cause and effect, all crisscrossing in different directions, as these have been discovered by experience or through science. And reason thus neglects the great connection which in a mysterious way binds

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everything together. Religion makes man aware of this forgetfulness. Religion says: "Calculation based on the causes discovered is wrong and dangerous, and may lead to failure; attune your mind to the cosmic sense, as a player tunes his violin,—and then play as best you can." Man has to remember for his own benefit that his home is his castle by the will and disposition of the true Overmaster, and that other unseen hands build his house together with him, that his every mite carries with it the living will of the Master. We cannot know the one law, to which the laws of the separate series are subordinate; and this unknown is the fate, the Master of creation. The inflexible method of science is good and stupendous, rendering to man some power over a limited sphere surrounded with a darkness "wherein God is." Modern man intoxicated by science forgets this darkness, and that the unknown may at every moment dispose otherwise when man proposes; his self-complacence is so thick that he does not see the signs, and on coming to reason after each setback begins at once to build again in the old false way. He is absorbed by care and trouble: he reckons, measures, lays one brick on another, works ever without rest. Then, suddenly a thunderbolt falls, or the power slumbering in objects

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awaken, according to some secret order. Lisbon is destroyed by an earthquake; the magnificent and ingeniously built *Titanic* sinks to the bottom of the ocean; a war breaks out and specialists in demolition destroy what art has built with eager zeal; or even sometimes in man a strange passion will surge, so that he will in a frenzy leap into the flaming pile. Then, at last, come fatal accident, sickness, even death. Listen to a charming song, write down the words, and record the melody: this is but the skeleton. Thus every act contains a complete and unrepeatable structure; there are some forces and interactions of forces which are inaccessible to reason forever.















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